THE *GLOSS* AND GLOSSING: WILLIAM LANGLAND'S BIBLICAL HERMENEUTIC

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the use to which William Langland puts the *Glossa Ordinaria* to authorize his vision of ethical, social and ecclesiastical reform in *Piers Plowman*. There was much in late fourteenth-century England to arouse the ire of the reformer and satirist and among Langland's targets was glossing the Bible. Yet the Bible was only available in glossed editions; so why and how did he differentiate between the *Glossa Ordinaria* and contemporary glossing?

The answer seems to lie in the exploitative and dishonest use to which glossing was often put. Langland sees beyond that, however, recognizing the ethical perils of linguistic diversity and more serious still, the lack of ethical content in, and even the antinomian tendencies of, conventional (mostly Augustinian) understandings of some major Christian doctrines, such as predestination and free will, original sin, grace, the image of God in man, the Incarnation of Christ and the relationship between wisdom, knowledge and love. The thesis examines the extent to which Langland deviates from these conventional understandings and revisits older understandings with more ethical productivity and a greater motivation for the laity to live ethically. He finds in the *Gloss* a source of such understandings.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
CUP	Cambridge University Press
EETS	Early English Text Society
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
MÆ	*Medium Ævum*
MED	*Middle English Dictionary*
OUP	Oxford University Press
PBA	*Proceedings of the British Academy*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
PQ	*Philological Quarterly*
RES	*Review of English Studies*
ST	*Summa Theologica*
YLS	Yearbook of Langland Studies.

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John Young Leicester, February 2011.

INTRODUCTION

There was a time when scholars were unobservant of the degree of learning shown by William Langland in his great poem *Piers Plowman*. For example, J. M. Manly writes: "as he exhibits no special theological knowledge or interests, he may have been a layman".[1] Similarly, it is unheard-of now to find any scholar writing like G. R. Owst, who denies that Langland gained access to theology through reading:

> M. Jusserand knows well enough that both Langland and Dante are heirs to the same body of Catholic doctrine; but he cannot explain how the comparatively simple English poet obtained his special knowledge without crediting him with a knowledge he certainly never possessed.[2]

For Owst, the pulpit is the only possible mediator between the body of Catholic doctrine and *Piers Plowman*, but he neglects to consider how Langland, while relying solely on the spoken word, could have cited so many Biblical and theological texts, in the main, so accurately. Perhaps in those days, the spell of the Whig view of history was still potent, relegating pre-Enlightenment writing to a lower division of achievement.

It seems strange that what appears now so self-evident has not always been recognised. How has this happier situation come about? Even before the Second

[1] J. M. Manly, '*Piers Plowman* and its Sequence', in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. 2, ed. by Sir A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 1932), p. 35.

World War, a different perspective was emerging, one which gave Langland some credit for learning and literacy. Greta Hort, for example, showed that some of his Biblical quotations have come by way of the Breviary and the Missal. But she was then an isolated figure.[3]

Since then, much scholarly attention has been devoted to the question of Langland's reading; what he read, and in what form, for example by D. W. Robertson and Bernard Huppé,[4] David Aers[5] and John Alford.[6] Robertson and Huppé comment: "Although it is impossible … to determine what commentaries the author of *Piers Plowman* used, it is not difficult to find his interpretations in printed commentaries which may be regarded as standard".[7] Leaving aside the obvious fact that Langland had no access to printed commentaries, the question of what commentaries were available to him still remains. Many of these would have been in the form of a gloss, a commentary on the Bible, written in the margins or between the lines of the Biblical text. An interlinear gloss is of necessity brief, and may include vernacular translations, explanations of rhetorical figures and etymologies. The marginal has fewer constraints on the amount of content and therefore includes more exegetical material.

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which Langland is indebted to the *Glossa Ordinaria* ("the *Gloss*"), the most authoritative of all glosses, whose origin

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[2] *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), pp. 57-8.
[3] *Piers Plowman and Contemporary Religious Thought* (London: SPCK, 1938).
[4] *Piers Plowman and Scriptural Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951).
[5] *Piers Plowman and Christian Allegory* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975).
[6] 'The Role of the Quotations in *Piers Plowman*', *Speculum* 52, (1977), 80-99, and *Piers Plowman: A Guide to the Quotations*, (Binghamton NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992).
[7] p. 4.

and development will be dealt with in the next chapter. The title is not found until the fourteenth century; previously, the word *glosa* was used, as Ker's catalogue bears witness.[8] The *Gloss* is composed of excerpts from the commentaries of the Fathers, overwhelmingly from the western tradition, chiefly SS Augustine (d. 435), Jerome (d. 420), Gregory (d. 604) and Bede (d. 735), and Cassiodorus (d. 583). Langland would have been aware of the content of the *Gloss*, since glossed Bibles were almost the only ones available. The *mise-en-page*, usually with the Biblical text at or near the top centre of the page, and the gloss surrounding it in smaller letters, would have made it inescapable. So far, no-one has attempted to investigate the extent of Langland's indebtedness to the *Gloss*, though nothing will ever prove that he is always quoting directly from the *Gloss*. Although he is not exclusively dependent on the *Gloss* for his knowledge of the Fathers, nevertheless it was for him and his contemporaries an accessible and authoritative codification of patristic and early medieval Biblical exegesis.

Further work on the use to which Langland put his reading, in particular his theological stance, has been done by Denise N. Baker,[9] Janet Coleman[10] and Robert Adams.[11] Adams is of particular interest in this study, because, while he stops short of attributing to Langland anti-Augustinian polemical motives, he notes that the poem challenges the teachings of St Augustine on a number of fronts, beginning with the basic question of how people are saved, taking in predestination, free will and the

[8] *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2nd edition, 1964).
[9] 'From Plowing to Penitence: *Piers Plowman* and Fourteenth-Century Theology', *Speculum* 55, (1980), 715-25.
[10] *Piers Plowman and the Moderni* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1981).
[11] 'Piers' Pardon and Langland's Semi-Pelagianism', *Traditio* 39, (1983), 367-418.

nature of divine grace; the nature and significance of the pardon in Passus vii; and the social and political issue of bribery, centred on Lady Mede. Adams also gives an overview of Langland's theology and a review of scholarly work on it, though it is now dated.[12]

From the work of these scholars, as well as the poem itself, it is clear that Langland was more than capable of handling theological themes and debates and casting them into poetic form. Reading *Piers Plowman* reveals the range and relevance of his knowledge of Scripture, the Fathers, and twelfth-century writers such as St Bernard (d. 1153) and Peter Comestor (d. 1178). The debate seems to have wound down since then, apart from Paul Sheneman's article.[13] Nevertheless, a return to it is not simply going over old ground; it can also provide the impetus for a new consideration of Langland's method, his audience and the content and structure of the poem itself.

For the study of Langland's references and quotations by themselves is only a means to an end and may be only of antiquarian interest. What is of greater value is to examine what he does with them, and why. This study will therefore endeavour to see if it is possible to discern any underlying principle or tendency behind Langland's use of the *Gloss*, not simply to illustrate his theological awareness, but as evidence on the basis of which he can be positioned in the vigorous theological controversies of his own day. In addition to the issues covered in Robert Adams' article, these include: the

[12] 'Langland's Theology', in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. by John A. Alford (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 87-114.
[13] 'Grace Abounding: Justification in Passus 16 of *Piers Plowman'*, *Papers on Language and Literature*, 34, (1998), 162-76.

inheritance or otherwise of original sin; the salvation of the heathen; the validity or otherwise of the natural human knowledge of God; the necessity of Baptism for salvation; the relationship between faith and works; the precise value of poverty, or otherwise; the legitimacy of the ownership of property by the church and institutions within it; the nature of the *imitatio Christi* in the contemporary world; the nature of the image of God in man; the Incarnation of Christ and its implications for God's own experience and for human behaviour in society; and the relationship of knowledge and wisdom to love. It seems there may be a particular issue over the authority of St Augustine. Langland has a detailed knowledge of some of Augustine's writings; but does he always accept Augustine's authority or sometimes challenge it? This raises a still further question as to whether the *Gloss* itself demonstrates a wariness of Augustine's characteristic doctrines of original sin, predestination and grace.

It is impossible to investigate Langland's theology without examining his stance on personal and political ethics. The poem contains so much political and social satire; how does this relate to his theology? To what extent is his theological critique shaped by ethical considerations? While a poem containing so much Latinity indicates a partly clerical audience, what signs are there that Langland believes that the exegesis contained in the *Gloss* is also normative for lay practice?

It will appear that *Piers Plowman* is much more than the sum of its parts. In drawing on so much heterogeneous material, Langland makes of it something unique. However, it needs to be borne in mind that *Piers Plowman* is a poem and not a theological treatise. So we have to ask how the theology is cast into imaginative and

poetic form.

Not only is glossing important for the detailed content of the poem; the poem is a scriptural gloss in itself, interpreting the Bible for the contemporary church and society. Instead of proceeding by an academic method (though academic methods further the argument of the poem at several points), Langland creates characters such as the Doctor, and Piers and Will themselves, as embodied commentaries on Scripture. In their development and interactions, his own theological stance, and even more important, his agenda for reform become apparent. We would be wrong to expect a clear and consistent line all the way through, as if *Piers Plowman* were one of Wycliffe's writings. Far from being univocal, the poem is a polyphony of different voices. Because of the nature of the personifications themselves, their interactions, disagreements and mutual criticisms, not to mention the development between the poem's three main versions, it is important not to impute to Langland the views of all his characters. Only by attributing this polyphony to a deliberate intention on his part can we make sense of it; otherwise he is reduced to the discarded caricature of an unsophisticated and uneducated medieval poet. In general terms, one might expect to discover Langland's own voice at the points where Will actually learns something positive and takes responsibility for himself. Because they are Will's own higher faculties through which he internalises what his experience teaches him, some weight can be given to the words of Ymaginatif, but more to those of Anima. Most weight of all should be given to the words of Christ himself, his *alter ego* the Samaritan, Grace (the Holy Spirit) and Kynde (God the Father).

The realisation of the range of references contained in *Piers Plowman* is bound to raise questions as to the poet's identity, not simply his real name and places of origin and residence, but also his status and function within the church. However, to try and reconstruct his biography from scattered hints in *Piers Plowman*, though seductive, is most unlikely to gain complete scholarly assent. This has not stopped people from trying. E. Talbot Donaldson thinks Langland may have been an acolyte, though "an intellectual catch-all".[14] More recently, Lawrence Clopper has argued that he was a Franciscan friar,[15] and Ralph Hanna III has characterised him as a hermit.[16] Kathryn Kerby-Fulton accepts the factuality of C v 1-104, in which Will justifies before Resoun and Conscience his way of life as an itinerant intercessor, possibly in minor orders.[17] Derek Pearsall has listed some of the other literature on the biographical aspects of *Piers Plowman*.[18] Nor does the fact that Will falls asleep on the Malvern Hills prove that Langland was a Worcester(shire) man, and although the dialect of the poem is mainly that of the West Midlands, the existence of Old Norse loan words such as "layke" and "tofte" (C Prologue 187 and C i 12) suggests a wider range of personal or literary contacts. It is perhaps wise, in view of this, to draw a distinction between the real author of the poem and the constructed persona of William Langland, or Long Wille, whose life the poem purports to narrate.

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[14] *Piers Plowman: the C-text and its Poet* (London: Cass, 1966), p. 160.
[15] '*Songs of Rechelenesse': Langland and the Franciscans* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).
[16] in *Written Work: Langland, Labor and Authorship*, ed. by Steven Justice and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. 24.
[17] Ibid, p. 70.
[18] *An Annotated Critical Biography of Langland* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990).

The editions of *Piers Plowman* which I shall use are as follows: *Piers Plowman: the A-version,* edited by George Kane;[19] *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of the B-text, based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17*, second edition, edited by A. V. C. Schmidt;[20] and *Piers Plowman: the C-text*, second edition, edited by Derek Pearsall.[21] All Biblical quotations are from the Vulgate version, mostly that to be found in volumes 28-9 of Migne's *Patrologia Latina*. Given the sheer number of manuscript variants in the millennium between Jerome and Langland, it can hardly be maintained that Langland used the exact version contained in Migne. But equally, by definition, he cannot have used any version later than his own day. The same applies to the *Gloss*; it can hardly be claimed that the version in Migne, volumes 113 and 114, is the exact one that Langland used. Complicating matters still more, as we shall see in the first chapter, is the existence of Peter Lombard's *Magna Glosatura*.[22] But his additions to the *Gloss* include nothing significant for the purposes of this study. The first printed edition will only be cited for corroborative purposes, on the grounds that it is impossible to tell when changes from the Migne manuscripts were made.[23] However, there is enough commonality between the manuscripts to be reasonably confident that the text that Langland used did not differ appreciably from the Migne version. Most of the translations of the Vulgate, the *Gloss* and other quotations are my own, except where otherwise indicated.

[19] University of London: the Athlone Press, 1960.
[20] London: J. M. Dent, 1995.
[21] Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1994.
[22] PL 191.
[23] *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria.* Facsimile Reprint of *editio princeps,* (Adolphus Rusch: Strasbourg, 1480-1), ed. by Karlfried Froehlich and Margaret T. Gibson (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992).

ONE

THE *GLOSS* AND GLOSSING

The tradition used to be that the *Glossa Ordinaria* was compiled by the Frankish monk Walafrid Strabo (d. 849), and it is under his name that it appears in Migne's *Patrologia Latina* (volumes 113 and 114). However, the earliest known attribution to him is as late as 1494, and comes from a group of proto-Herderian German humanists, anxious to acquire illustrious predecessors. Though some glosses are by Strabo, the attribution of the whole to him is clearly impossible; the *Gloss* on Romans 11: 13 is attributed to Anselm.[1] Whichever Anselm - of Laon, Lucca or Canterbury - is intended, he clearly postdates Strabo; yet the attribution to Strabo is perpetuated even today in the online *Catholic Encyclopaedia*.

The reconstruction of the *Gloss*'s origins began with Beryl Smalley, and no-one has found serious grounds for dissent from her conclusions.[2] More recently, Lesley Smith has published a detailed account of the origins, contents, production and use of the *Gloss*, revealing a long and collegial process of compilation.[3] Traces of the *Gloss* on the Gospels can be found as far back as the eighth century. One of its pioneers, Hrabanus Maurus, Walafrid Strabo's teacher (d. 856), actively looked for ways in which the contemporary church and lay rulers could be reformed by modelling themselves on scriptural characters.

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[1] PL 114, 508.
[2] 'The Origins of the *Gloss*', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 6, 1938, 103-113; *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964).
[3] *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

Glossed Psalters and Pauline Epistles became the norm in the eleventh century. As the moving spirits behind the compilation of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, Smalley nominates the early twelfth-century scholars Anselm of Laon (d. 1117) and his younger brother Ralph (d. *circa* 1134). Their work is sometimes referred to as the *Parva Glosatura*; it consisted only of commentaries on the Psalms and Pauline Epistles. Alexander Andrée, however, makes Gilbert the Universal (d. 1134) the definitive compiler of the complete *Gloss*.[4]

About the same time, an independent *Gloss*, the *Media Glosatura*, was produced by Gilbert de la Porrée (d. 1154), likewise covering the Psalms and the Pauline Epistles. The more durable and prestigious *Magna Glosatura* was the work of Peter Lombard (1142-6) who, according to Herbert of Bosham, sought to remedy the obscurities and brevities of Anselm.[5] But this too only deals with the Psalms and the Pauline Epistles.

The use of glosses was not confined to the lecture hall. Walter Daniel records St Aelred of Rievaulx (d. 1167) calling on his deathbed for a glossed Psalter, which suggests that it was used for devotional purposes as well as academic. Our modern distinction between theology and devotion, our "dissociated sensibility", in T. S. Eliot's phrase, would not have been understood in the Middle Ages.

The *Gloss* is not by any means a beginner's guide to the western exegetical

[4] *Gilbertus Universalis Glossa Ordinaria in Lamentationes Ieremie…Proethemata et Liber1. A Critical Introduction and Translation* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2005) (http://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:195103/FULLTEXT01, pp. 23-4).
[5] 1964, p. 64.

tradition; the user is required to have a prior body of knowledge from which to work. Especially is this true where the commentary on a particular text is abbreviated, signalled by an *etc*. and terminates with the phrase *usque ad*; the reader is then left to look up what has been omitted. It is apparent that the text in the *Gloss* often deviates from its parent passage in the patristic writings; it is sometimes impossible to find where the omitted passage ends, leaving that end of the citation hanging; in a few instances, no parent text can be found within the *Patrologia Latina*. The reader is expected to work on the text he is given and be able to make good from his own knowledge what the glossator says nothing about, as Gilbert the Universal's commentary on Lamentations indicates:

> Rethoricorum colorum splendorem et sententiarum gravitatem et elocutionis ornationem me tacente diligens lector non tacebit. Locorum quoque rethoricorum multitudinem et dialecticorum raritatem et argumentorum subtilitatem gratis inveniet. (While I keep quiet, the diligent reader will not be silent about the splendour of the rhetorical colours or the profundity of the meaning or the adornment of the language. For free, he will also find a multitude of rhetorical heads, also dialectical excellence and subtlety of argument.)[6]

The exegesis contained in the *Gloss* differs considerably from what one would expect to find in a modern commentary. Beginning in the New Testament itself, Scripture was expounded according to a fourfold system, the literal-historical sense and three

[6] Andrée, 2005, p. 170.

spiritual senses.[7] These were the allegorical, the tropological and the anagogical senses. The allegorical was a means of making the text refer to the person and saving work of Christ and finding contemporary relevance in texts whose original context was now obsolete; the tropological or moral sense was the use of Scripture to inculcate right behaviour; and the anagogical applies the text to the eschatological future. In the *Gloss*, a spiritual interpretation is sometimes introduced by *mystice* or *allegorice*. Exegesis was not simply an interpretation, but a means of appropriating the text; it was thus an altogether more creative process than its modern equivalent, as Rita Copeland argues: "One of the most important rhetorical actions that exegesis performs upon the text is to 'rewrite' it according to the significance that the interpreter discovers for the text".[8]

Though the completion of the *Gloss* was a definitive and culminating point, it should not be thought that that was the end of the development of glossing. Though it was regarded as an authoritative text-book at the University of Paris during the second half of the twelfth century, there was a constant process of expansion and revision which gathered momentum towards the end of the century, to such a pitch that Beryl Smalley comments: "It seems that the text of the *Gloss* had got out of control in the years between its reception and Langton's lectures",[9] although Andrée, following Gibson,[10] says roundly, "the text, though intended for school use, was never subject to perpetual revision by masters and students, as is customary with classroom notes. It was always a

[7] Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 4 vols., trans. by Mark Sebanc (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), vol. 1, *The Four Senses of Scripture.*
[8] *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 76.
[9] 1964, p. 226.
[10] M. T. Gibson, 'The Place of the *Glossa Ordinaria* in Medieval Exegesis', in *Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and their Medieval Readers*, ed. by Mark D. Jordan and Kent Emery, jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

library text".[11]

Smalley, however, argues that the needs of masters were in fact paramount in the way the *Gloss* was used. The method they followed was simply glossing the *Gloss* itself, as seen in Peter Comestor's lectures on the Gospels, perhaps dating from before he became Chancellor of the University of Paris in 1168.[12] So an anonymous Master added a second Prologue to St Jerome's in the *Gloss* on St Matthew, because the latter did not contain enough material for one lecture.[13]

The most innovative late twelfth-century Biblical exegete was Stephen Langton (d. 1228). Smalley shows how he gives himself permission to take a quite independent line and find spiritual meanings different from those in the *Gloss*, including a change of emphasis within the spiritual senses, from the allegorical sense to the moral.[14] This is the most crucial of his innovations; it marks a shift from the internal to the external worlds, from the imagination to observation. Lecturing on the moral sense, he gives himself *carte blanche* specifically to identify people and things in the Biblical text with contemporary equivalents. One motive for this is his wish to use Scripture to inculcate the responsibilities of prelates, which was later to bear fruit in the careers of a number of thirteenth-century scholar-bishops. For example, he provides his own gloss on Amos 7: 10-13, in which the priest Amasius is presented as a type of the bad and greedy prelate in alliance with the King, while Amos is identified with "the learned doctor who threaten

[11] Smalley, 1964, p. 41.
[12] ibid, p. 65.
[13] ibid, p. 217.
[14] ibid. p. 249-58.

(sic) us so terribly in your preaching".[15] Amasius, in dismissing Amos back to Judah, is likened to those who would send reforming bishops back to their studies in Paris. A similar example can be found in his exegesis of IV Kings 1: 2, in which he translates Samaria, whose standard Hebrew meaning is a defensive position, as *custodia* (charge), and the whole passage is made to refer to prelates and their pastoral office.[16] It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Langton is stretching the meaning to advance his own agenda, for the Biblical Amos is anything but a "learned doctor".

This creates a further difficulty, which Langton does not succeed in remedying. He is unable to appeal to a body of political truth accepted by all comparable to the body of theological truth. For example, in commenting on Joel 2: 13, he identifies the sun with the Church and the moon with the secular power. He at first appears to question the identification, but then finds a compromise solution from the text, namely that both are liable to eclipse by sin and spoliation.[17] The demands of political conflict are again seen to be shaping his agenda; but in particularising, he undermines his own implicit claim to universal authority.

By his use of the moral sense in such a topical way, Langton has thus opened up the possibility of satire, drawing on Biblical stories and characters, paving the way eventually for *Absalom and Achitophel*. Smalley tartly comments: "Langton has perfected the art of making the Scriptures say exactly what he pleases",[18] but the problem

[15] ibid, p. 252.
[16] ibid. p. 259-60.
[17] ibid. p. 261.
[18] ibid. p. 260.

is in fact even more serious. While one may be sympathetic to his purpose, and place him firmly on the side of the angels, he has nevertheless embarked on a slippery slope. Less idealistic, and more worldly, teachers than he could, and did, abuse his topicalising precedent in order to exploit the Bible to justify their personal or institutional ends at the expense of others, or even that of the whole Church. When the analytical rigour required for satire runs out, then only polemic is left.

The development of glossing continued into the thirteenth century. There were by now glosses in abundance. So when a (or the) *Gloss* is mentioned, it is no longer necessarily the *Glossa Ordinaria* that is intended, as for example, the "glose" referred to in B xii 292. But the *Gloss* was to retain its pre-eminence and authority until well after the invention of printing, and even until after the Counter-Reformation had passed its peak.

The thirteenth century's main innovation was the invention of the *postilla*, in other words a commentary only on lemmatised portions of the Biblical text. The first known example of this is the commentary of the Dominican friar, Hugh of St Cher (c. 1235). His intention was to supplement the *Gloss* with the fruits of work done since Anselm's time. The bulk of the space on the page is now given over to commentary; the biblical text is squeezed into a small area in the top centre of the page. Hugh in fact provides us with the earliest surviving instance of the friars being themselves the moral meaning of Scripture; he moralises the story of the plucking of the ears of corn (Mark 2: 23-28), making the fields of corn the Scriptures, the disciples the friars, and the Pharisees

the secular masters.[19] Judson Boyce Allen somewhat extravagantly credits Langland with close familiarity with Hugh's exposition of Psalm 22.[20]

The friars form the intellectual bridge between Stephen Langton and the world of William Langland. They were crucial in continuing Langton's turning away from the allegorical sense to the moral sense, and in so doing, helped to forge satirical and polemical weapons that were to be used so formidably against themselves from the time of William of St Amour (c. 1256) up to the time of William Langland himself. Though superficially, they may seem to be continuing Langton's approach, in fact the contrast is complete. Whereas Langton harked back to the reforming ideals of Hrabanus Maurus, the friars used scriptural models to justify their own situation and methods; far from reform, the purpose was essentially polemical and partisan.

Nicholas of Lyra in the mid-fourteenth century produced the most prestigious of the *postillae*, the *Postilla Litteralis*, which was frequently published along with the glossed Bible from the fifteenth century onwards. Nicholas marks the culmination of a process of redefinition of the relationship between literal and spiritual senses which began with St Thomas Aquinas. While insisting on the primacy of the literal sense, Nicholas seeks to include both literal and spiritual senses within the conscious intention of the human author, which in turn coincides with the mind of God himself. Perhaps this was in reaction to the blatantly partisan purpose to which so many commentators had been putting their glossing; it certainly marked a return to the more objective patristic

[19] ibid. p. 269.
[20] Judson Boyce Allen, 'Langland's Reading and Writing: Detractor and the Pardon Passus', *Speculum* 59: 2 (April 1984), 342-62.

tradition. Langland can be seen as an heir of this more reverent approach to Scripture which is not to be corrupted by the misinterpretations of self-interested moderns.

Glosses and *postillae* were not the only means available of communicating the teachings of the Fathers to the scholars and clergy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The first was the development of *compilatio*. M. B. Parkes demonstrates how the desire to follow an argument stimulated a demand for the *auctoritates* in their original context.[21] So booklets were compiled of single works or groups of short works, for example Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 568 which comprises eight booklets of works by St Augustine. Parkes describes how the compiler operated differently from the scribe:

> The compiler adds no matter of his own by way of exposition (unlike the commentator), but compared with the scribe, he is free to rearrange (*mutando*). What he imposed was a new *ordinatio* on the materials he extracted from others.[22]

Compilers also produced the first western encyclopaedias in the later Middle Ages, for example the *Speculum Maius* of Vincent of Beauvais (from which Langland quotes in B xiv 276) and the *De Proprietatibus Rerum* of Bartholomeus Anglicus. Material could be presented in whole books or chapters (*distinctiones*) or according to

[21] 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book', in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. by J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 115-41.
[22] ibid. p. 128.

topics. This gave rise to the need for indexes or *tabulae*. G. R. Owst refers to the thirteenth-century *Speculum Laicorum*, which is cross-referenced as well as in alphabetical order, so that the reader "may not spend too much time in hunting about".[23] Will's use of "*Contra*!" in B viii 20, x 343 and xii 277 corresponds to the use of the word to mark the stages of an argument inserted by fourteenth-century readers in the margins of older texts. So we see that the *Glossa Ordinaria* was by no means the only source-book for the interpretation of Scripture Langland was able to draw on.

A second channel through which glossing reached the fourteenth-century church was through preaching handbooks, whether in the form of encyclopaedic *Summae* or *Florilegia*. So for example, John Bromyard's *Summa Predicantium* treats 189 topics, some theological, e.g. *Fides*, some secular, e.g. *Mercatio*, all arranged alphabetically. The material is drawn from a whole range of sources, including pagan philosophers and men of letters as well as Scripture and the Fathers, and is by no means original; Owst has found parallels in French sermon MSS of the thirteenth century (1926, p. 303).[24] Similar, but on a very much smaller scale, is the Wycliffite *Rosarium Theologiae*.[25]

A *florilegium* is a selection of highlights from a particular author, arranged according to subject-matter. It corresponds to our contemporary *Reader*. One particular example, the *Flores Bernardi,* was in wide circulation in medieval England, to judge

[23] *Preaching in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 305.
[24] ibid, p. 33.
[25] *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologiae*, ed. by Christina von Nolcken (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, Universitätsverlag, 1979).

from Ker's list, and may well have been the immediate source of Langland's quotations from St Bernard.

However, the practice of glossing had clearly become suspect by the late fourteenth century, as not only Langland, but other contemporary writers, such as Chaucer and Gower, bear witness. Chaucer's Summoner is blatant about his misapplication of Scripture, and the attendant scope for financial exploitation:

> I have to day been at youre chirche at messe
> And seyd a sermon after my simple wit,
> Nat al after the texte of hooly writ:
> For it is hard to yow, as I suppose,
> And therefore I will teche yow al the glose.
> Glosynge is a glorious thing, certain,
> For letter sleeth, so as we clerkes seyn.[26]

Gower, going further still, uses the word *glose* to mean falsehood:

> Covoitouse flaterie…
> Which many a worthy king deceiveth
> Er he the fallas aperceiveth
> Of hem that serven to the glose.[27]

[26] *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* ed. by F. N. Robinson, 2nd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1957); *The Summoner's Tale*, 1788-92, p. 95.
[27] *Confessio Amantis,* 7, 2168-71. *The Complete Works of John Gower: the English Works,* ed. by G. C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), vol. 1, pp. 291-2.

Wendy Scase has drawn attention to Langland's attacks on glossing as one important aspect of clerical abuse, in the context of the anti-clerical literature of the time.[28] Numerous examples can be given of Langland's distrust of glossing, such as:

I fond there freres, alle the foure orders,
Prechynge the peple for profit of [the] womb[e]:
Glosed the Gospel as hem good liked;
For coveitise of copes constrewed it as thei wolde (B Prologue, 58-61).

In the banquet scene, Pacience reveals the kind of glossing the Great Doctor practises:

For now he hath drunken so depe he wole deveyne soone
And preven it by hir Pocalips and passion of Seint Avereys
That neither bacon ne braun ne blancmanger ne mortrews
Is neither fissh ne flessh but fode for penaunts (B xiii 90-3).

Grace warns Piers and Conscience against glossing as one of the bad influences on kings and the nobility, following the coming of Antichrist: "And false prophetes fele, flateris and gloseris,/ Shullen come and be curatours over kynges and erles" (B xix 222-3).

[28] *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Glossing is one aspect of the malpractice of Sire-Penetrans-Domos, who likewise subverts the whole purpose and practice of Confession: "Thus he gooth and gadereth, and gloseth there he shryveth –/ Til Contricion hadde clene foryeten to crye and to wepe,/ And wake for hise wikked werkes as he was wont to done" (B xx 369-71). Glossing is here portrayed as opposite to truth, minimising sin and preventing repentance.

However, the pejorative use of the word notwithstanding, it is clear that in practice, Langland is continually glossing in a positive sense, expounding Scripture and assigning contemporary relevance to many Biblical verses and passages. Yet there is no glossing over; invariably the audience is sharply recalled to an interpretation of Scripture which makes practical demands on them. Langland's quotations show that not only the *Gloss* itself, but even other glosses, could still be legitimately and illuminatingly used. He even does some glossing of his own in the best fraternal style, explaining etymologies and expounding Biblical texts by giving them a fourteenth-century *Sitz im Leben*. At one point, the friars themselves are his victims (B xiii 68-75). So the practice was not completely abandoned.

It will be useful at this stage to discuss Langland's explicit references to the "Sauter glose". A distinction between glossed and unglossed Psalters may be thought to be implied here, but it is more likely that he suggests that the glossed Psalter was by this time the norm. The first reference occurs in B v 273-6a, where Repentaunce discourses to Coveitise on the necessity for restitution, quoting Psalm 50: 1 and 6:

For alle that han of thi good, have God my trouthe

Is haldynge at the heighe doom to helpe thee to restitue;

And whoso leveth noght this be sooth, loke in the Sauter glose

In *Miserere mei Deus*,[29] wher I mene truthe:

Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti…[30]

"Glose" is simply a descriptive adjective here; the *Gloss* adds nothing to the text of the verse.

The second reference is in the C-text version of the same passage:

ȝe, þe prest þat thy tythe toek, trowe y non other,

Shal parte with the in purgatorye and helpe paye thy dette

Yf he wiste thow were such when he resseyued thyn offrynge.

And what lede leueth þat y lye, look in þe sauter glosed, on

Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti,

And there shal he wite witterly what vsure is to mene,

And what penaunce the prest shal haue þat proud is of his tithes (C vi 300-5).

Here Repentaunce adds specific criticism of the priest who profits from Coveitise's

[29] Have mercy on me, O God.
[30] For behold, you have looked for truth.

extortion, an instance of untruth, for which he will have to pay in Purgatory. This is not to be found in the *Glossa Ordinaria*; one can only assume that it comes from another glossed Psalter, but now perhaps lost.

The third reference occurs in the speech of Dame Studie, who boasts of having taught Scripture the study of the "Sauter glosed", among other elements of the Seven Arts course (B x 172). This will be dealt with in chapter nine.

A fourth reference is to be found in the speech of Anima:

That I lye noght, loo! – for lordes ye plesen,
And reverencen the riche the rather for hir silver:
Confundantur omnes qui adorant sculptilia: Et alibi,
Ut quid diligitis vanitatem, et queritis mendacium?[31]
Gooth to the glose of the vers, ye grete clerkes;
If I lye on yow to my lewed wit, ledeth me to brennynge! (B xv 81-4).

Appealing to the *Gloss* here heightens the challenge to the friars for their avaricious and corrupt lives. There is a suggestion that they are not studying the Psalter, because if they were, they would be aware of what the *Gloss* says. This is perhaps connected with the strictures on the academic content of their university courses in B xx 274-6. A great deal is at stake here, since Anima, if he is wrong, fears burning, the penalty for heresy, though not at that time in England.

[31] Let those who worship carved images be confounded: and elsewhere, Why do you prefer foolishness and seek after untruth?

The reference in C iii 328, "So god gyveth nothing þat si ne is the glose", applies generally to any marginal note.

Although these alleged citations are not to be found in the *Gloss*, it will still be the contention of this thesis that Langland used the *Gloss* and regarded it as authoritative. We can still see how integral the *Gloss* was, at least in theory, to the interpretation of Scripture. As Judson Boyce Allen points out, "Langland's quotations always carry with them reference to the context from which he got them, whether in the Bible or some quotation of it in gloss or sermon".[32] This seems plausible from the very nature of medieval Biblical manuscripts. So it is clear that in describing the Psalter as glossed, Langland accepts the authority of the patristic exegesis contained in it, and what is true of the Psalter is by extension true of the rest of Scripture.

[32] 1984, 343.

TWO

THE LANGUAGES OF *PIERS PLOWMAN*: QUOTATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

The investigation of Langland's use of the *Gloss* cannot take place effectively without first examining his quotations from the Latin Bible, although it needs to be recognised that not all Langland's quotations are included in the *Gloss*, and not all the allusions to the Bible are in quotation form; some are paraphrases or retellings. The presence of so many Latin quotations in *Piers Plowman* raises the question of their significance. Amongst contemporary poets, there are none in the works of the *Gawain*-poet, and few in Chaucer. Gower's *Confessio Amantis* has Latin marginalia. The only extant close parallels in verse from the last third of the fourteenth century are in the slightly later *Friar Daw's Reply* and *Jack Upland's Rejoinder*. Among contemporary prose writers, Walter Hilton has many. We must ask whether there is more to the presence or absence of Latin than a matter of audience.

It is important to set this present chapter against the background of the work of D. W. Robertson and Bernard Huppé's book.[1] While they have perhaps devoted more effort than any other scholars to relating the theological content of *Piers Plowman* to the western patristic exegetical tradition as exemplified chiefly in the *Gloss,* many of their references do not bear close inspection. They find allusions where there are none; seizing too often on single words from the poem, they discover correspondences

[1] *Piers Plowman and Scriptural Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951).

in the Gospels and the *Gloss* which prove to lack substance. Without an adequate context in which a keyword is embedded, the supposed reference appears far from solid. One example is "donge", which occurs in the words of Reson: "And if ye werchen it in werk, I wedde myne eris,/ That Lawe shal ben a labourer and lede afelde donge,/ And Love shal lede thi lond as the leef liketh" (B iv 146-8). Taking this as an allusion to Luke 13: 8 ("At ille respondens, dicit illi: Domine, dimitte illam et hoc anno usque dum fodiam circa illam et mittam stercora"[2]), Robertson and Huppé quote the *Gloss*:[3]

> *Mittam stercora*. Id est, malorum quae fecit abominationem ad animum reducam, et compunctionis gratiam cum fructibus boni operis quasi de pinguedine stercoris exsuscitem. Peccata enim carnis stercora dicuntur, quae intermittuntur ad radicem arboris, quando pravitatis conscientiae tangitur cogitationis memoria, et dum inde penitat quasi per tactum stercoris redit ad fecunditatem operis. (*I will put dung.* That is, I will withdraw from the evils which inflict defilement on the soul and will awaken the grace of compunction along with the fruit of good works, as if from the richness of dung. For the sins of the flesh are spoken of as dung, which are placed at the root of the tree when the memory of thought is touched by awareness of depravity, until he repents, as if by the touch of dung, he returns to the fruitfulness of works.) (PL 113, 303).

[2] And in reply, he said to him, "Leave it alone, Lord, this year also, till I dig round it and put on dung."

Robertson and Huppé claim that the dunging "is intended to suggest the ensuing confession of the folk". However, a more careful study of Langland's context reveals that the subject of the dunging is Lawe, a personification of the legal profession. So "donge" appears to have no theological significance, and is only included as an illustration of what labourers do, and as a slight to the social status claimed by lawyers. However, though there may be much to cavil at in the detail of Robertson and Huppé's book, its central argument is hard to fault; Langland did draw heavily on the exegetical tradition of the church. This study will differ from theirs in that I do not regard the *Gloss* as the key to an allegorical reading of the whole poem; it is an authoritative reference point, certainly, as the citations in the following chapters will reveal, but not the key to unlock all mysteries.

Further questions need to be raised: what is the purpose behind the quotations? What does Langland do with them? Does he translate them, paraphrase them or leave them alone? Are any patterns discernable? And, more germane to this study, to what extent does Langland use the technique of glossing for his *inventio*? The investigation will take place in two fields, the poetic and the political. Exploring them will enable us to situate *Piers Plowman* in the conflict over Latinity in the late fourteenth century.

Several suggestions as to the function of the quotations have been put forward. John Alford, in principle, starts from Robertson and Huppé in asserting their crucial

[3] Ibid. p. 69

importance.[4] But whereas Robertson and Huppé proceed on the basis that the quotations are secondary, Alford argues by contrast that

> [Langland] *began* with the quotations, and from them, using the standard aids of a medieval preacher, derived the substance of the poem. In general, scholarship has looked for the structure of *Piers Plowman* in the English portions of the poem; I shall be looking for it in the Latin (emphasis Alford's).[5]

Alford takes Conscience's and Pacience's speeches in B xiv as case-studies, referring all their quotations back to two key sayings from the Sermon on the Mount, *fiat voluntas tua* and *ne solliciti sitis*, and revealing Pacience's speech as a commentary on Luke 14: 15-24. The quotations in B xiv can all be found, he shows, in Bromyard's *Summa Praedicantium*, where they appear under the headings of *Divitiae*, *Paupertas* and *Abstinentia*. This makes Langland's choice of them entirely purposeful.

However, it is difficult to accept that the poem as a whole is generated from the Latin quotations alone; some Biblical material only appears in English, some is only alluded to rather than quoted. Furthermore, though the study of the quotations by themselves undoubtedly throws light on the ideas expressed by some of the characters in the poem, it fails to give weight to the criticism of those ideas expressed by other characters. Alford clearly shows that static texts act dynamically within the speech of individuals such as Pacience, but fails to take into account the criticism of such

[4] 'The Role of the Quotations in *Piers Plowman'*, *Speculum,* 52 (1977), 80-99.

standpoints, implicit or explicit, in the speech of others, or indeed in the narrative of the poem itself. One example of this is that some speakers demonstrate how other speakers have taken verses out of context, for example Conscience vs Lady Mede (B iii 334-43), and Liberum Arbitrium vs Pacience. David Aers pays particular attention to the latter, showing how Liberum Arbitrium reveals the inadequacy and even wrongness of much of what Pacience says.[6] Christopher Cannon's approach is similar to Alford's, though he makes remembered "school exercises" the genesis of the poem.[7]

Tim William Machan takes exactly the opposite line from Alford, in that he finds the Latin quotations far from fundamental to the poem.[8] He examines them from the linguistic perspectives of borrowing and code-switching. Code-switching generally is not practised unless the speaker or writer is sure that the audience is going to understand; it is normally used either to reduce or intensify differences of status, whether real or assumed.

Machan suggests that code-switching is part of the speech-community of *Piers Plowman*, both internal and external, since, whatever their first language, many of Langland's contemporaries were mutually intelligible. Presumably, by the late fourteenth century, a majority of the clergy could speak English, and a growing minority of the laity could understand Latin. French too was still widely spoken

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[5] p. 82.
[6] *Sanctifying Signs: Making Christian Tradition in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), p. 136.
[7] 'Langland's *Ars Grammatica' YLS* 22, (2008), pp. 1-26, p. 25.
[8] 'Language Contact in *Piers Plowman'*, *Speculum,* 69 (1994), 359-85.

amongst the aristocracy, the gentry and the upper clergy. But on the evidence of at least two passages in *Piers Plowman*, one might harbour doubts as to the extent of the mutual intelligibility between the different speech communities of fourteenth-century England. As we shall see, Langland is alarmed at the social and moral exclusion which still affected monoglot English speakers.

Machan argues that speakers in the poem do, to a large extent, choose their linguistic codes *ad lib.*[9] On the other hand, the Angel's Latin in the B Prologue 131-8 is a marker for his celestial status,[10] which implies no choice. The two characters whose code-switching is most fluent are Pacience (B xiv 89-93), and Anima (B xv 389),[11] even more so than Scripture, Clergie and Ymaginatif; it is part of their characterisation as learned, presumably because their Latin has been so thoroughly internalised that they have become fully bilingual. Machan claims that Ymaginatif switches to Latin at the climax of his speech (B xii 280-2) in order to conceal from Will that which he does not need to know. This, however, is dubious; Will's grasp of Latin is often perfectly acceptable (for example B x 442a and 455), and in this particular instance, he seems to understand and accept Ymaginatif's words, since he never raises the issue of the salvation of the unbaptised again. Though Anima discusses the question in B xv, it is not at Will's instigation. One should not be misled by Lady Holi Chirche (B i 140-1a) and Scripture (B xi 1-4), who accuse Will of neglecting his Latin; his grasp of Latin is at least adequate and contains no howlers.

[9] ibid. 359.
[10] ibid. 373.

So Machan concludes that "the motivation behind the switches is still often ambiguous and irregular".[12] He argues that since switching is "not regularly determined by context, speaker, interlocutor, topic, lexical inadequacy or alliteration, then it is largely ornamental".[13] In other words, unlike Alford, Machan finds that rhetorical ornament is the only purpose in Langland's Latin quotations; they are merely a display of his poetic virtuosity. The status of Latin, Machan argues, is undermined partly by Will's use of it; and partly by its use as mere ornament, even in the speeches of Pacience and Anima, in a period when English was beginning to be used for theology and government.

Although Machan does not fully pursue his examination of the use of Latin for characterisation purposes and suggests that no consistent pattern exists, the subject should not be totally dismissed. He claims: "No speakers in *Piers Plowman* seem to use code-switching for one of its most common conversational purposes: to show solidarity with or social distance from an interlocutor".[14] This is not in fact the case. On one hand, when Will speaks in French to the friars, he seems to be trying to put himself on terms of equality with them (B viii 11). On the other hand, when a character fails to translate for a monoglot English-speaker, social distance is expressed. So Pacience fails to translate much of his Latin for Haukyn, the illiterate layman, for example B xiv 47a-b. Haukyn must be bewildered by Pacience's habit of switching from Latin to English and back again, even in the space of a single sentence, for example: "For shrift of mouth sleeth synne be it never so dedly - /*Per*

[11] ibid. 374-5. B xiii 65, which Machan ascribes to Pacience (371, n. 36), in fact belongs to Will.
[12] Ibid. 373.
[13] Ibid. 375

confessionem to a preest *peccata occiduntur*" – (B xiv 90-1). Ironically, apart from this instance, Pacience seems to be in too great a hurry to stop and translate. So perhaps the Latin in his speeches is not ornamental, but serves to indicate a barrier between him and Haukyn.

Distance also seems to be the reason for the Angel's exclusive use of Latin in the B-Prologue, lines 132-8. In this connection, A. V. C. Schmidt has drawn attention to the irony in lines 128-9: "And sithen in the eyr on heigh an aungel of hevene/ Lowed to speke in Latyn".[15] The angel does not condescend to speak in English, resulting in an absence of communication. Langland presumably has no animus against angels, but against God's earthly messengers whose linguistic pride prevents them from communicating the message of God.

If Machan is right in attributing the Angel's use of Latin to his celestial status, in that case one might expect Latin to be used, if not exclusively, at least extensively, by Christ's *alter ego*, the Samaritan, in B xvii and by Christ himself in the Harrowing of Hell in B xviii. But in the latter, Christ sometimes speaks Latin to the devils, mostly untranslated, to add drama and weight to the speech, for example:

> The Olde Lawe graunteth
> That gilours be bigiled – and that is good reson:

[14] ibid.
[15] *The Clerkly Maker* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), p. 44.

Dentem pro dente et oculum pro oculo[16] (339-41a).

The same can be said for lines 350a and 361a. Almost always in Christ's speech, the Latin is contained in discrete lines, presenting him as primarily an English-speaker rather than a bilingualist. This suggests that Langland sees Christ's relationship to English-speakers as one of immediacy; he speaks English as his mother-tongue, as if he is one of the people whose Redeemer he is.

The Samaritan also introduces untranslated Latin in his speech, though even more sparingly, for example:

> The fyngres that fre ben to folde and to serve
> Bitoknen soothly the Sone, that sent was til erthe
> That touched and tastede at techynge of the pawme
> Seinte Marie, a mayde, and mankynde laughte:
> *Qui conceptus est de spiritu sancto…* (B xvii 146-149a).

We can deduce from the Samaritan's practice of speaking Latin in discrete lines that he, like Christ, is an English-speaker. He assumes Will does not need translations, but chooses to substantiate his teaching on the Trinity by references to the Latin versions of the Creed, the Bible and a hymn. The same is true of Repentaunce in B v 479-506, who does not translate, but quotes proof-texts from the Vulgate in discrete lines, for example: "And madest Thiself with Thi Sone us synfule yliche:/ *Faciamus hominem*

[16] Tooth for a tooth and eye for an eye.

ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram; Et Alibi: Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo"[17] (487a-b).

J. J. Anderson takes a third view, attributing the use of Latin to aesthetic motives more profound than mere surface ornament.[18] He recognises not only Langland's skill in weaving untranslated Latin quotations into his Middle English alliterative line, the sign surely of bilingualism, for example B x 415, xii 114 and 151, xv 88, xvi 114, xvii 216, C xi 7 and xii 109, but also the weight that the use of Latin imparts. For example, comparing the A-text version of the story of Lot's incest with his daughters to the B-text, he sees the addition of Latin in the latter as adding force to the narrative (A i 27-31; B i 27-33). Similarly, the addition of Latin in B i 119a to the story of the Fall of Lucifer in A i 109-118 enhances the drama of the narration. Though the quotation is still present in the C-text, it no longer forms part of the narration, but instead forms an introduction to the explanation of why Lucifer went to the north. This exemplifies the C-text's more homilectic tendency.

The function of the quotations in *Piers Plowman* is only one issue concerning the poem's linguistic interrelations. A second issue is that of translation. This has been examined by Traugott Lawler.[19] He begins by asking why some quotations are translated, but not others, and finds, contrary to Machan, that translation, or its absence, is used as a device for characterisation. So those who act, or pose, as tutors

[17] Let us make man in our own image and likeness; And elsewhere; The one who lives in love lives in God, and God in him.
[18] 'Some Aspects of Scriptural Quotation in *Piers Plowman*: Lady Holy Church', *Bulletin of John Rylands Library*, 78 (1) (1995), 19-30.
[19] 'William Langland', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation into English*, vol. 1, ed. Roger Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 149-59.

translate. But beyond that, Langland seems keen to ensure that his audience understands the Latin and sees the relevance of the Latin quotations for their own lives in England, so inculturating what seems alien in terms of their own cultural horizons. So, for instance, he shows how Langland concretises Latin abstractions and introduces more verbs; for example B xv 331-40 contains nine, as opposed to the basis of those lines in Peter of Blois' Letter 102 which has only two.[20] As he moves from one version to the next, Langland more and more earths his translations from Latin in English specificities, for example:

> And al the wikkednesse in this world that man myghte werche or thynke
> Nis na moore to the mercy of God than in [middes] the see a gleede:
> *Omnis iniquitas quantum ad misericordiam Dei est quasi scintilla in medio maris*[21] (B v 283-4a),

which becomes:

> For al the wrecchednesse of this world and wikkede dedes
> Fareth as flonke of fuyr that ful amydde Temese
> And deyede with a drop water; so doth alle synnes
> Of alle manere men that mid goode wille
> Confessen hem and cryen hym mercy, shal neuere come in helle:
> *Omnis iniquitas quantum ad misericordiam Dei est quasi scintilla in medio maris* (C vi 334-8a).

[20] PL 207, 318.

Lawler demonstrates that in the A- and B-texts, God characteristically speaks English, preceded or followed by a Latin translation or paraphrase, for example: "That I makede man, now it me forthynketh:/ *Penitet me fecisse hominem*" (B ix 130-a). In the C-text (x 220a), however, the Latin appears without the English. Placing an English translation before the Latin quotation sometimes reads like an interlinear gloss, as used in contemporary grammar schools. The difference is that Langland's glossing is not on the grammatical or historical level, but theological and existential, both on the personal and social levels. At other times, it foregrounds the English and diminishes the status of the Latin.

However, a number of criticisms can be levelled at Lawler's thesis. Firstly, he does not discuss the absence of translations from B xix-xx, which demonstrates how the laity have now acquired "clergie", though no higher moral standards. Secondly, and more fundamentally, he does not raise the issue of what translation meant in the Middle Ages, although many of the translations he adduces are in fact extended paraphrases, as well as word-for-word translations.

Arising from this discussion, one wonders if Langland had an additional purpose in concretising the Latin, going beyond the desire to earth the poem in English specificities. While the abstractions and compressions of Latin might be acceptable to a purely clerical audience, an audience of late fourteenth-century laypeople, members of the first generation for whom English texts of a technical nature were written, would be likely to prefer a more expanded text, in order to have

[21] By comparison with the mercy of God, all iniquity is like a spark in the midst of the sea.

its meaning made as clear as possible. Perhaps what Chaucer writes for his ten-year-old son in the Prologue to his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* might have been as applicable to adult readers of English. He asks his reader to excuse "his superfluitee of wordes for two causes", the second of which is "that sothly me semith better to written unto a child twyes a god sentence, then he forgete it ones".[22]

Exegesis is bound up with the practice of *translatio* in medieval texts, which is hard to separate from that of exegetical commentary. It would be a mistake to assume that medieval and modern understandings and practices of translation are identical. Whereas modern scholarly practice is to stick as closely as possible to the meaning of the original, consistent with contemporary idiomatic usage, in the Middle Ages, as in antiquity, the preference was for the general sense to be translated. Thus A. J. Minnis and D. B. Scott quote Hugutio of Pisa who defines translation as "the explanation of meaning (*expositio sententiae*) in another language".[23] Similarly, Nicholas Watson writes: "in medieval texts, 'translatio' routinely refers to acts of interpretation or exegesis, or to 'the exposition of meaning in another language'".[24] A fine line then seems to exist between translation and glossing.

A major contribution to the study of medieval translation is that of Rita Copeland who shows that translation covers everything, from the glossing of

[22] *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* ed. by F. N. Robinson, 2nd edn. (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), lines 43-4, 47-9, p. 546.
[23] *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100 – c. 1375: the Commentary Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 374.
[24] 'Censorship and Cultural Change', *Speculum,* 70 (1995), 829, n. 16.

individual words or phrases to summaries of whole passages.[25] She shows how exegetical practices vary, from absorbing whole *lemmata* within the text of the exposition to breaking them up and distributing them among the commentator's own structure. She adds: "Through paraphrase, the commentary becomes container of, no longer supplement to, the original text, at least in terms of graphic and formal disposition".[26]

A twofold process is at work in medieval exegesis; firstly, *inventio*, which Copeland defines as the "discovery of one's own argument or subject out of available topics or commonplaces".[27] *Inventio* signifies the author's choice of material out of "an inherited tradition of written authority… a topical reserve".[28] The hermeneutics of *inventio* in the *Gloss* are largely governed by ecclesiastical concerns and involve allegorising the text, to overcome the hermeneutic gap between the past of the text and the present of the contemporary church. The second process is the exegete's own treatment of the chosen text using the classical rhetorical devices of *amplificatio* and *abbreviation*, expansion or shortening.

Among the texts discussed by Copeland, two are especially noteworthy. The first is Horace's *Ars Poetica,* lines 131-4:

> Publica materies privati juris erit, si
> Non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem

[25] *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
[26] Ibid. p. 83.

> Nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus
> Interpres (Public material will be private property, if you do not linger over the common and open way, and if you do not try to render word-for-word like a faithful translator…)[29]

Horace implies that word-for-word translation is of no major interest or importance. His insistence on the *auctor* making his own the text he has inherited became the medieval norm, even beyond exegetical and theological texts. The other key text which Copeland examines is St Jerome's letter to Pammachius. He repeats Horace's strictures, but this time as an injunction:

> Sed et Horatius, vir acutus et doctus, hoc idem in Arte poetica erudito interpreti praecepit: *nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus interpres.* (Moreover, Horace, a perceptive and learned man, in the same way in the *Ars Poetica* commanded the skilled translator: Do not attempt to render word for word like a faithful interpreter.) (PL 22, 571)

Elsewhere in the same letter, Jerome quotes with approval Evagrius of Antioch, who argues that literal translation can in fact obscure the meaning:

> Ex alia in aliam linguam ad verbum expressa translatio sensum operit et veluti laeto gramine sata strangulat. (A literal translation made from one language to

[27] Ibid. p. 7.
[28] Ibid. p. 160.
[29] Text and translation by Rita Copeland, 1991, p. 29.

another cancels the sense and like a luxuriant weed, throttles the cultivated plant.) (PL 22, 572)

The result was that in the early Middle Ages, Horace's phrase, *fidus interpres*, was usually understood to mean an interlingual, word-for-word translator, with dismissive overtones, and an implied expectation that the commentator should instead provide original exposition. Of course, in a wholly Latinate culture, the need for word-for-word translation did not exist. It only became an issue again when the rising status of the vernaculars and the spread of education amongst the laity challenged the hegemony of Latin.

Two things in Copeland's book are of particular relevance to this study. Firstly, the incorporation of Biblical text into the commentary. We can see something of this in the *Gloss* on Luke 17: 7, where Bede incorporates the Biblical text into his commentary, and illuminates it by bringing in a text from another Gospel:

> Servus arans et pascens doctor est Ecclesiae, de quo dicitur: *Nemo mittens manum ad aratrum et aspiciens retro, aptus est regno* (Luc. 9) Dei. Et Dominus Petro dicit: *Pascens oves meas* (John 21). (The servant who ploughs and pastures is a teacher of the Church, of whom it is said, *No-one, putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom* of God. And the Lord said to Peter: *Feed my sheep.*) (PL 114, 318)

Hrabanus Maurus (d. 856), as we have seen, followed Bede's practice of

treating biblical images as types of roles in the contemporary church. His purpose was not only scholarly; part of his motivation was the desire for the reform of the church.

Secondly, the appropriation of an earlier text by the practice of *abbreviatio* and *amplificatio*. A good example is Gilbert the Universal's *Gloss* on Lamentations, which is a revision of the commentary of another ninth-century Frankish scholar, Paschasius Radbertus (d. 865). Alexander Andrée observes:

> For the major part of the commentary, he has used him exclusively, rewriting and abbreviating, polishing and omitting... For Gilbert, the Old Testament prophet's lamentations become an exercise in classroom rhetoric.[30]

As we saw in the excerpt in the previous chapter, Gilbert seeks to embellish Radbertus' text by the devices of Ciceronian rhetoric, turning the exercise from scriptural exegesis into a display of rhetorical technique. But to the moralist, this is a distraction.

Langland can be described as a compiler, using traditional material and giving it his own *ordinatio*. He proposes a model of individual growth and a programme of social reform, as God's *intentio;* he then practises *inventio,* drawing on the *auctoritates,* the Bible, the Fathers, classical school texts and others; and finally, uses *dispositio* to make himself an *auctor,* arranging material according to his own structural plan (though what this is, of course, is a matter of debate). His technique as

[30] Op. cit. pp. 61 and 75.

an *auctor* is in line with the medieval practice of *translatio*. Though he often translates word-for-word, he also appropriates traditional material, providing free-ranging expositions and using rhetorical techniques inherited from antiquity. For example, in the passage in which, as we have seen, he expands on Peter of Blois, he is appropriating the earlier text by subjecting it to the rhetorical practice of *amplificatio.* Like Bede, he brings together Biblical texts such as Genesis 1: 26 and I John 4: 16, thus using one to gloss the other. One can see the same development in the *Piers Plowman* tradition*;* not only the original texts but also the marginal annotations in many manuscripts and the illustrations in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104 exemplify a continuing process of appropriation and interpretation, as do fresh compositions such as *Piers the Plowman's Crede* and *The Praier and the Complaynte of the Ploweman.*

A significant example of the medieval practice of *translatio* comes in response to Haukyn's demand from Pacience for a definition of poverty. Pacience replies in Latin (B xiv 275-6d), eliciting a protest from Haukyn: "I kan noght construe al this," quod Haukyn, "ye most kenne me this on Englissh."/ "In Englissh," quod Pacience, "It is wel hard, wel to expounen" (277-8). He proceeds to give a general exposition without actually translating anything. In C xvi 118-56, however, Pacience has become truly patient; he expounds in English what each phrase means, though still without translating the Latin word-for-word.

We may find in this an echo of an earlier passage. Thought, in characterising Dobet, says:

And with Mammonaes moneie he hath maad hym frendes,
And is ronne into religion, and hath rendred the Bible,
And precheth to the peple Seint Poules wordes –
Libenter suffertis insipientes cum sitis ipsi sapientes:[31]
[Ye wise], suffreth the unwise with yow for to libbe,
And with glad wille dooth hem good, for so God yow hoteth (B viii 89-91).

Schmidt glosses "rendred" as "read aloud and expounded", not translated.[32] The Middle English Dictionary does give "translated" as a possible reading, though, since the instance it quotes is unique, perhaps not much reliance should be placed upon it. In view of Rita Copeland's work, we should not adopt a mutually exclusive distinction between translation in the medieval sense and exposition. It also needs to be noted that Thought's translation is a poor one, missing the irony, and translating the Vulgate's indicative with an imperative. So we have an act of interpretation, in Watson's phrase, with the result that it resembles a gloss rather than a translation in our modern sense.

Langland is, of course, not the only late fourteenth-century writer who has to negotiate the ecclesiastical primacy of Latin. This was very much a political issue at the time, and therefore the rest of this chapter will be devoted to considerations of the politics of linguistic choice in Langland's time. By choosing to write an English poem, with extensive Latin quotations and some French, Langland was making a

[31] You suffer fools gladly when you yourselves are wise.
[32] 1995, p. 439.

political decision. Translating from Scripture into one's mother-tongue represents an appropriation of it as authoritative for, and relevant to, one's own speech-community; not translating it inevitably leaves it as something external. The result of translation in *Piers Plowman* is that the vernacular supplants Latin, partly on the grounds of sheer quantity, rather like the *Gloss* would overwhelm the biblical text by sheer quantity, were the Biblical text not normally written in larger letters and rubricated at significant points.

None of this is given due weight by Alford, Machan and Anderson. They tend to assume uniformity of practice in the use of Latin across all the characters and do not examine what the characters' use of Latin reveals of their attitudes and motivations (though Lawler does at least mention Langland's characterisation). They all fail to take into account the difference between those characters whose Latin is contained in discrete lines, and those who use Latin macaronically; and between those who translate and those who paraphrase. Ultimately, the exclusively literary justifications these four adduce for the Latin quotations fail to satisfy, because the use of Latin in the poem cannot be abstracted from the intense conflict over the use of English, along with its ecclesiastical and political ramifications, in the late fourteenth century. Alford in particular fails to ask why anyone would want to generate an English poem out of Latin quotations. And against Machan, it seems unlikely that in such an overwhelmingly ideological age, anyone would have created something akin to "art for Art's sake". So we need now to examine relationships between the quotations and references and the political background of the period. Two important issues are involved here; the relation of Langland to the Wycliffite movement, and the

tension over the distinction between clergy and laity, with a subsidiary question concerning the nature of the audience of *Piers Plowman;* and the necessity of communicating the Gospel in the vernacular, and strategies for doing so, in addition to word-for-word translation.

Firstly then, the relation of Langland to the Wycliffite movement during the period of the appearance of the various texts of *Piers Plowman* itself. It should be possible to discuss this without becoming embroiled in issues concerning the reception and appropriation of *Piers Plowman* at the end of the fourteenth century and into the fifteenth. As Anne Hudson has observed, "…unusually, perhaps uniquely, [*Piers Plowman*] is a poem whose impact became more unorthodox as time passed";[33] but this must not cloud our perception of the poem itself. In any case, the potential for an appropriation different from Langland's own intentions always existed, as evidenced in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. This is not the place for a detailed examination of where Langland stood in relation to the Wycliffite heresy or who was indebted to whom; the ground has already been thoroughly covered by Pamela Gradon[34] and Anne Hudson. Although there may not have been a direct contemporary relationship between Langland and the Wycliffites, however, by the time the C-text, if not the B-text, of *Piers Plowman* appeared, the Church was engaged in strenuous efforts to combat the Wycliffite heresy, and clearly there is an overlap in themes and concerns.

[33] *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 408.
[34] 'Langland and the Ideology of Dissent', *PBA*, 66 (1980).

One such theme is the legitimacy of the use of the vernacular in theological debate. Preaching in English for controversial purposes was not without precedent in fourteenth-century England; Richard FitzRalph preached in English against the friars in 1356-7,[35] and perhaps the corporate memory of the mendicant orders helps to explain their hostility to vernacular translations aimed at enlisting lay support and protection, even though they themselves had pioneered preaching in the vernacular. Langland obviously is in favour of using the vernacular, evidenced simply by the fact of writing a theological poem in English. Wycliffe's followers were of the same mind, especially as they, even more than FitzRalph, needed to enlist lay support. Anne Hudson recounts how Nicholas Hereford in 1382, and John Aswardby, between 1384 and 1395, preached in English in Oxford, appealing to the laity against the authority of the church.[36] She even goes so far as to claim that the use of English was *ipso facto* regarded as evidence of heresy,[37] though Andrew Cole disputes this.[38]

The relationship between theological debate and Latinate exclusivity has been explored by Kantik Ghosh.[39] He observes: "For the very existence of such discourses {sc. the intellectual discourses of the Schools} was based on a remarkable degree of academic freedom." But this was permitted on the basis of "its privileged and *isolating* Latinity, with its own closed circle of clerical practitioners". He adds:

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[35] W. Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 9.
[36] 1988, pp 72 and 96.
[37] 'Lollardy; the English Heresy?' in *Lollards and their Books* (London: Hambledon, 1985), pp. 141-63.
[38] *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 82-4.

> Such freedom becomes unsustainable when academic discourses - especially those relating to modes of Biblical signification and its construction of interpretative authority – enter an unregulated and unsupervised sphere of 'popular' intellection, where non-forbidden questions may very easily result in forbidden answers.[40]

What he writes about Wycliffites applies equally well to Langland, who challenges the Latinity of theological discourse by writing an English poem on theological themes, and defies institutional authority, for example by putting forward forbidden answers to the forbidden question (since Archbishop Simon Langham's *Constitutions* of 1368) of the salvation of the heathen. Along similar lines to Ghosh, Mary Dove cites numerous instances of clerical defensiveness and the lack of a trusting pastoral relationship with the laity, many of them centred on the use of English for theological purposes.[41]

Though a new situation in fourteenth-century England, Rita Copeland sees the beginnings of a challenge to Latinate exclusivity on the continent as early as the writings of Notker of St Gall (c. 950-1022).[42] However, he seems to have aroused no hostility amongst his contemporaries; hostility seems to have been a product solely of the late fourteenth century in England. Copeland observes in connection with Dante's *De Convivio*: "the vernacular appropriation of academic discourse poses a threat to

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[39] *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[40] Ibid. p. 211.
[41] *The First English Bible: the Text and Context of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[42] 1991, pp. 97-103.

the traditional institutional privilege of academic criticism".[43] This applies to Langland also; he too recognises, in Copeland's words, "that the institutional privilege of academic discourse is a product of historical and material conditions rather than of some immanent value and mystified necessity".[44] Use of the vernacular to treat academic topics thus implies a critique of the ideology underlying the use of Latin. For knowledge of Latin is the result of accidents "of birth, station, place and opportunity", Latinity the result of "the cultural conditions that impede access to the language and resources of learning".

The challenge to Latinate exclusivity applies, *par excellence*, to the translation of the Bible into English. The Wycliffites shared with Langland the desire that the contents of the Bible should be available to monoglot English speakers, the Wycliffites through their translation of the entire text, Langland through the incorporation of salient Biblical *loci* in his text, rather than *in extenso*. This is symptomatic of a deeper difference. While the Wycliffites translate word-for-word, Langland writes as an interpreter; his primary text is *Piers Plowman*. The Bible and the Fathers are secondary. The poem itself is the vehicle for the religious and ethical critique of England. By incorporating the Bible and the Fathers into the English text of the poem, Langland takes further the kind of appropriation of the Bible which we have seen in Bede, ensuring that there continues to be an effective dialogue between Scripture and Langland's present.

In a later article, Rita Copeland examines the conflict over Biblical translation

[43] Ibid. p. 180.

from a pedagogical standpoint, exposing a barrier, on the reactionary clergy's side, between themselves (male, adult, educated), and the laity (male and female, childish, uneducated).[45] The literal sense of Scripture was the site of this barrier. The clergy felt

themselves threatened by the laity's interest in the literal sense, like the priest in his conflict with Piers, partly in respect of their intellectual hegemony, and partly, as Wendy Scase has shown, their material interests in property and power.[46] When laypeople study the Bible in the vernacular, the literal sense loses its academic privilege in the eyes of the clergy and by them "is returned to its debased value as the tool of elementary pedagogy".[47] This reaction seems irrational and inconsistent, since the contemporary dominant hermeneutic trend was to follow St Thomas Aquinas and Nicholas of Lyra in extending the scope of the literal sense to include the entire intention of the divine author of Scripture. The literal sense could not therefore with consistency be dismissed as merely elementary. In a more recent book, Copeland distinguishes between the academic literal sense, which was acceptable, and the elementary, surface literal sense of childhood pedagogy, which was not.[48]

So while the reactionaries would not countenance the use of the literal sense to empower the laity, Langland defies them by quoting Scripture and the Fathers, and by engaging in hermeneutics, at least partly in English, for example through Pacience and Conscience in B xiv. However, signs of anxiety are evident in Ymaginatif's

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[44] Ibid. p. 182.
[45] 'Childhood, Pedagogy and the Literal Sense', in Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland and David Lawton (eds.), *New Medieval Literatures*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 125-156.
[46] 1989, pp. 45 and 165.
[47] 1997, p. 143.

rebuke of Will for his "makynge" (B xii 16-19), and Will's interrogation by Reson and Conscience (C v 1-104).

The Wycliffites, by contrast with their opponents, privilege the literal sense in an older, more restricted form; the "open" meaning of the Bible is for them the only significant one.[49] The Prologue to the Wycliffite *Glossed Gospels* makes available to a lay audience the fruits of patristic Biblical scholarship; the Biblical text itself is underlined to distinguish it from commentary, and the glosses are all assigned to their respective authors. Furthermore, the anonymous Wycliffite preacher of the sermon *Omnis Plantacio* (c. 1410) invites corrections from his audience there and then, implying that they are capable of doing so by virtue of their access to the open text. He states his intention of leaving a copy with them, so that when he returns, further corrections can be made. Copeland describes this as "a collective project of revision".[50] This suggests a parallel with *Piers Plowman*; there is a constant process of revision throughout the poem, as one speaker succeeds (and contradicts or modifies) another, bringing new depth to the debates, but in turn being contradicted or relativised by what follows. Copeland also draws attention to the role of satirical books in the education of boys, because "satire was understood to operate at the literal level".[51] Its moral purpose must also have been a factor in its pedagogical importance. *Piers Plowman* is among other things a satirical work, but interestingly, because of its use of the moral sense, it has more than a strictly literal meaning.

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[48] *Pedagogy, Intellectuals and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 101.
[49] 1997, p. 148.

Secondly, the crisis over Wycliffe and his followers was undoubtedly one factor in the sharpening differentiation between clergy and laity in the late fourteenth century. Immediately before, growing lay literacy had to some extent blurred the distinction, a process which Langland appears to have enthusiastically supported. He portrays a clergy detached from the laity, speaking a different language and owing allegiance overseas. The role of Dame Studie is particularly interesting in this context. On one hand, she is a woman, and a married one at that, who would conventionally be deemed incapable of study. Some of Langland's earliest audience would doubtless be aware of the wrath of St Jerome against female involvement in theology:

> Alii adducto supercilio, grandia verba trutinantes, inter mulierculas de sacriis philosophantur. Alii discunt, proh pudor, a feminis, quod viros doceant. (Some, with brows contracted, weighing great words, philosophise amongst the little women. Others learn – for shame! – from women what they should teach men.) (PL 22, 544)

The Wife of Bath is, of course, fictional; but she might embody, in reactionary eyes, what could go wrong when the laity, especially women, have access to Scripture, and are allowed to do their own glossing. Dame Studie, however, seems to belong to the reactionary party; her denunciation of Wit for casting his pearls before swine (B x 1-3) is paralleled in the anti-Wycliffite writings of Henry Knighton (c. 1382) and Thomas Palmer (c. 1401).[52] She also objects to laypeople, even lords, discussing the

[50] Ibid. p. 150.
[51] Ibid. p. 136.
[52] Dove, 2007, pp. 6 and 8.

problem of evil (B x 103-27). In jeering at Will's Latin, Scripture (also female and a preacher) too attempts to deprive him of his status and humiliate him.

Fiona Somerset uses the concept of extraclergiality to explore how clerical status and function were blurred in a range of texts from the late fourteenth century, including *Piers Plowman.*[53] Extraclergiality refers to clerics presenting themselves as laymen, while still drawing abundantly on clerical learning and methods of argumentation. It is a strategy used to create a satiric distance between the author and his clerical targets, and to enhance his authority. Somerset highlights the interplay between "clergie", which conventionally signifies learning, and "lewedness" which signifies ignorance. She considers Will, Piers, Ymaginatif, Anima and the "lewed vicory", all of whom are "lewed" in some sense, while appropriating clerical roles of preaching and interpretation. She emphasises "the deliberate paradoxical incompatibility of Piers's and Will's social position with their learning".[54] As a ploughman, Piers, who also has to have Latin translated for him at first, is assigned "lewed" status. But he adopts a clerical role (B vii 136-9, and in his subsequent appearances). His learning, however, is ethical in content, not academic; he has been taught by Conscience and Abstinence the Abbess.

There is also an oscillation between "lewed" and "clergie" roles in Will. Reson and Conscience confront him on his status and function in C v 11-104. Afterwards, though we do hear about his "longe clothes" (41), we are left none the wiser as to the

[53] *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 22-61.
[54] Ibid. p. 29.

content and location of Will's studies, the position he holds or the source of his livelihood. But he has to acknowledge that his manner of life is similar to that of the voluntary mendicants whom he here distances himself from and elsewhere satirises (C v 82-101, ix 166-86). One might add also that while he believes he is justified in his prayers and penances (C v 84-5), voluntary mendicants elsewhere have no part in prayers and penances (C ix 174). He also, on the basis of his "clergie", regards himself as free to wander about, while agreeing with the law's denial of the same privilege to labourers:

> For may no cherl chartre make, ne his c[h]atel selle
> Withouten leve of his lord – no lawe wol it graunte.
> Ac he may renne in arerage and rome from home,
> And as a reneyed caytif recchelesly aboute (B xi 127-30).

So his credibility is undermined.[55] Just as the priest scorns Piers' Latin, so Lady Holi Chirche and Scripture scorn Will's, the latter with more asperity than the former.

The A-text ends abruptly, as Will, identifying himself with the "lewed", claims they are more assured of salvation than the learned (A xi 293 - 313). Somerset's interpretation of Langland's apparent failure to progress the A-text beyond this point is that he was unable to develop the paradox of extraclergiality. But at this point in the B-text (B x 476), the paradox continues to be fruitful. Will persists in his rejection of learning:

[55] Scase, 1989, pp. 139-40, 161-73.

Clergie tho of Cristes mouth commended was it litel,

For he seide to Seint Peter and to swiche as he lovede,

"*Dum steteritis ante reges et presides…*

Though ye come bifore kynges and clerkes of the lawe,

Beth noght abashed, for I shal be in youre mouthes,

And yyve yow wit at wille [with] konnyng to conclude hem

Alle that ayeins yow of Cristendom disputen" (B x 441-7).

The speech is transferred to Rechelesnesse in the C-text, and the rejection of "clergie" is there intensified. Rechelesnesse denies that Christ ever commanded "clergie". Instead, the "lewed" will receive "clergie" directly from God in their hour of need:

Thus y, Rechelesneese, haue yrad registres and Books

And fonde y neuere in faith, for to telle treuthe,

That clergie of Cristes mouthe comaunded was euere.

For Crist seide to sayntes and to suche as he louede:

Dum steteritis ante reges vel presides etc.

Thogh ȝe come bifore kynges and clerkes of þe lawe

Beth nat aferd of þat folk for y shal ȝeue ȝow tonge

And connyng and clergie to conclude such alle (C xi 277-282).

So, without academic study, the "lewed" will be "supernaturally endowed with

scholastic disputational skills".[56] One might add, as further evidence of his extraclergiality, Will's identification with the ordinary English-speaking layman (B x 452-475a), while later he seeks to authenticate his clergiality by making clerical in-jokes in Latin (B xiii 73a-b).

Somerset then turns her attention to Ymaginatif, who takes on the magisterial role, and manner, in defence of "clergie" in B xii/ C xiv, but fails "to state a consistent final position".[57] She points to a fundamental difficulty in discussing Ymaginatif's attitude towards "clergie", which in his view only clerks possess; and though there is a personification called Clergie in B x and C xii, it does not follow that his views on "clergie" and Ymaginatif's coincide.

Somerset highlights a range of inconsistencies in Ymaginatif's speech. Firstly, he claims that clerical status and learning go together, but since the clergy are to share their learning with all (B xii 99-154, C xiv 44-98), anyone can thus acquire learning (155-90, C xiv 99-130), with the result that the clergy would no longer have an intellectual monopoly and so be in no better position than the "lewed". Secondly, Ymaginatif says that clerks are necessary for salvation, presumably as essential ministers of grace (105-12, C xiv 50-7). Yet earlier, he has said that grace comes independently of the clergy, from the Holy Spirit. But then, in claiming that Baptism is not essential for salvation (280-95, C xiv 205-17), he implies that the clergy are not indispensable. Thirdly, Ymaginatif demonstrates the necessity of "clergie" by

[56] Ibid. p. 35.
[57] Ibid. 41.

ascribing learning to the shepherds and even by adducing the "neck-verse", the words from Psalm 15: 5 ("Dominus pars hereditatis mee"[58]) which an accused man could quote to prove himself a cleric and thereby escape hanging (185-90, C xiv 125-30), while only grudgingly accepting that the Penitent Thief is in Paradise (191-215a, C xiv 131-48). Fourthly, Ymaginatif defends "clergie", not solely by appeals to Biblical and patristic texts, as one might have expected, given his theme, but by "kynde wit", using similes, symbols and analogies, such as the peacock in lines 235-60. At the end, however, he switches from this experiential mode to an academic one (277-82, C xiv 202-17). Fifthly, Somerset sees a conflict between Ymaginatif's injunction not to argue with clerks and Lewte's advice to do just that (B xi 96-100, 103-6). Ymaginatif identifies "clergie" with Clergie and accuses Will of having "contraried" Clergie. But according to Somerset, Clergie's criticism of the clergy is attributed to the "lewed", and he takes no responsibility for it. The outcome of this is that Ymaginatif fails to convince that "clergie" belongs in any essential or permanent sense to clerics, or that grace is "subject to clerical administration".[59]

Several criticisms of detail may be made against Somerset's interpretation of Ymaginatif. Firstly, he does achieve a consistent final position, one which lays to rest Will's insistence on the necessity of Baptism and the issue of the salvation of the righteous heathen, though admittedly it does not arise naturally out of what has gone before. We also hear no more of Will's anti-intellectualism. Secondly, it is Baptism and absolution that the clergy dispense, not learning (xii 105-12, C xiv 52-7). Thirdly,

[58] The Lord is the portion of my inheritance.
[59] Ibid. p. 49.

given his name, one would expect Ymaginatif to use similes and symbols, because the task of imagination is to acquire knowledge from sense experiences. Fourthly, though Clergie does quote the criticisms of the clergy by the "lewed" in B x 279-90 (omitted in C), the criticism of religious is his own (B x 291-329). But Will has only "contraried clergie" in the sense of learning, and then only after Clergie has finished speaking. He has agreed with Clergie in his criticisms of the clergy and championing of the "lewed". His contradiction of Clergie solely consists of claiming that Baptism is essential for salvation. It is also questionable whether Ymaginatif is wrong to chide Will because he has argued with Clergie and therefore failed to "do as Lewte teacheth" (B xii 32, not in C), since the content of Lewte's teaching is not about Will and Clergie, but Dowel. What Lewte has in fact said is that since Will is not a clerk, he can therefore publish what the friars have said. This means that Lewte has not advised Will to argue with clerks, and Ymaginatif has misrepresented Will.

Even more criticisms can be levelled at Ymaginatif, for example his clericalisation of the shepherds in B xii 140-2a:

> For the heighe Holy Goost hevene shal tocleve,
> And love shal lepe out after into this lowe erthe,
> And clennesse shal cacchen it and clerkes shullen it fynde:
> *Pastores loquebantur ad invicem.*[60]

Ymaginatif does not continue the quotation; the implication seems to be that the

[60] The shepherds spoke to one another.

shepherds' conversation was a private one, with no effects in the world beyond their circle. Of course, the identification of shepherds with the ministers of the Church goes back to the New Testament. But here we have a complete appropriation of the secular occupation by the ministerial; real life is reduced to a metaphor. Clerks in the guise of shepherds become the discoverers of the Nativity, which becomes the topic of their (untranslated) Latin discourse. This is an internal dialogue amongst the clergy which mirrors their practice in receiving, but failing to hand on, divine revelation. It is this "closed circle of clerical practitioners", in Ghosh's phrase, which Langland challenges.[61]

Also, although he refers to the "lewed" asking masters why Adam covered his genitalia but not his face, Ymaginatif does not appear to believe that clerks have the answer (B xii 231-3, omitted in C). Yet he is still an authoritative voice, beginning by upbraiding Will for arguing with Reson, going on to remind him of his advancing years and warning him therefore to be vigilant, and ending with his pronouncement on Trajan's salvation.

On a more general level, it seems doubtful whether Ymaginatif can truly be claimed as an extraclergial voice; he is too committed to clerical status and academic learning to evince any sympathy for the "lewed" and their empowerment *vis-à-vis* the clergy.

[61] 2002, p. 211.

Somerset points to an unanswered question raised by Ymaginatif's speech, namely how "clergie" is to be shared with the "lewed". She then scrutinises Anima. Anima is clergial; he freely quotes Scripture and the Fathers. But he gives himself the "lewed" label (B xv 83). On the other hand, he applies the word "lewed" pejoratively to the clergy in the general sense of worldliness, not specifically immorality (321, C xvii 55). But he too is open to criticism. He normally translates Latin into English, for example his names in lines 23-39 (C xvi 181-200), but fails to translate Pseudo-Chrysostom, and Bruno's gloss on Job (117-22, 319-21, C xvi 271a-h, xvii 53 a-d), hiding behind expressions such as "If lewed men knewe this Latyn…" He has, however, paraphrased Pseudo-Chrysostom already (92-102, C xvi 242-54), as if he were protecting himself from accusations of trouble-making, under the cover of quoting from an authoritative teacher. He does not explain the mechanics of the ecclesiastical reform he envisages (550-55a, omitted in C); but one wonders about the relationship between "love" and the rather threatening reference to the fate of the Templars (545-6, also omitted in C). So Anima keeps the knowledge he claims to want to share separate from its social consequences. He is also only addressing the powerful, not the ordinary laity. He too fails to convince as an extraclergial voice, because he withholds too much "clergie". (Most of this also applies to Liberum Arbitrium who takes Anima's place in the C-version.) But perhaps Langland is using Anima's Latin practices to dramatise, not so much his political shiftiness, as his circumspection.

Finally, there is the "lewed vicory", who at first sight explicitly embodies the paradox of extraclergiality, although Somerset points out that "vicory" in Middle

English can refer to any kind of deputy. She does not, however, take into account his role as a "curatour" (B xix 414, C xxi 410), which places him amongst the clergy; "curatour" is applied pejoratively to the clergy in B xix 222 (omitted in C). Is "lewed" to be interpreted positively, neutrally or negatively, as an authenticating or displacing or denigrating word? It is difficult to grasp what his standpoint is, or what resolution he offers. It does seem that now that "clergie" has been obtained by the "lewed", it is misused, for example by the lord, who justifies his exactions by reference to *Spiritus Intellectus* and *Spiritus Fortitudinis* (B xix 466-7, C xxi 463-4). Laypeople are thus no better than the clergy. So the paradox of "lewed clergie" reaches an unsatisfactory resolution, and when Will inscribes himself into the poem (B xix 1 and 485), he seems to align himself finally with the clergy, though pessimistic about whether disseminating his "clergie" in the form of a "making" can really produce any positive effect on society. At the end of Somerset's survey, one is likely to conclude that the only really convincing extraclergiality belongs to the two central characters, Piers and Will. One also wonders whether the poem's demonstration of the "lewedness" of those with "clergie", especially the Priest in the Pardon scene, the Great Doctor and the friars in B xx/C xxii, is one of its main functions.

Perhaps in reaction to the tentative blurring of the distinction between the clergy and the laity, by the beginning of the fifteenth century, there was a school of thought that regarded putting vernacular scriptures in the hands of the laity as dangerous and wrong. Thomas Palmer, for example, is quoted by Mary Dove: "Sacra scriptura non est malis totaliter communicanda voce vel scriptura." (Holy Scripture

ought not to be communicated to sinful men in its totality, orally or in writing.)[62] As Nicholas Watson comments, Palmer's attitude towards the laity is one of "fear and contempt";[63] laypeople are sinful by definition. Doubtless such an attitude was forming during Langland's lifetime, in reaction to the Wycliffite controversy, and is perhaps exemplified in the Priest's attitude to Piers. Its apogee was reached when Archbishop Arundel of Canterbury promulgated his *Constitutions* in 1409, outlawing written translations of the Bible into English, and even, by implication, single verses in written form, without diocesan permission.[64]

The questioning of the distinction between clergy and laity has a bearing on the question of the audience of *Piers Plowman*, of which there is little direct indication in the poem. The ground has already been thoroughly covered by John Burrow[65] and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton.[66] The number of extant MSS gives a good indication of the extent of the poem's reach; yet its audience seems to have been a *coterie* whose members did not all fit into the traditional "Three-Estates" model of society, and lacked political power.

However, one or two additional points can usefully be made. If one discounts Machan's and Anderson's analyses and accepts that the function of the quotations is more purposeful than just literary, does this reveal anything about the audience of the

[62] 2007, p. 8.
[63] 1995, 844.
[64] Ibid. 828-9.
[65] 'The Audience of *Piers Plowman'*, *Anglia* 75: 4 (1957), 373-84.
[66] *Written Work: Langland, Labor and Authorship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 64-143, especially pp. 71-78.

poem? One possible answer, in line with John Burrow's argument, is that there were two audiences, clerical and lay, in which case the Latin quotations are attributable to a desire to provide enough authorisation to secure the clergy's acceptance of the poem, in order to bring clergy and laity to a common mind. This is similar to Walter Hilton who consistently translates or paraphrases, presumably for a monoglot audience, for whom quoting Latin originals is an essential authorising strategy. Yet the poem is in English, which suggests a lay audience, as well as a clerical one. There is here possibly a medieval version of post-colonial hybridity; the reconfiguration of stories and illustrations from a metropolitan culture into a vernacular language and culture, both of which are however united by the omnipresence of the Church and by living in an agricultural economy.

An alternative explanation might be that Langland quotes Latin in defiance of the reactionary clergy, as an upholding of the laity's right to know Scripture. A challenge is thereby offered to the crude stereotypes of the clergy as learned, and all the laity as "lewed" and *idiotes* by definition. This is perhaps part of the significance of Langland's choice of a ploughman as his (admittedly elusive) central character, behind whom, later in the poem, an audience might remember there stands a fisherman. Hence Piers is patronised by the Priest (B vii 105-14) and, like Will later, is scorned for his lack of learning (131- 6).

A third possibility is raised by an observation of Rita Copeland's, *à propos* of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis:*

> The visual difference between the vernacular poetry and the Latin headings which point up the academic affiliations of the poem expresses a kind of tension within the work, as the Latin apparatus can be seen as a mechanism for controlling the subversion of the poetic fiction.[67]

This is possibly also relevant to *Piers Plowman*, but if Langland's intention were to employ his Latin quotations to control the subversiveness of the poetic fiction, it does not succeed; the conservatism of *Piers Plowman* is much more ambiguous than that of the *Confessio Amantis.*

If Langland composed the A- and B-texts for a mixed audience of clergy and laity, is this also true of the C-text? In addition to its more pronounced homilectic tendencies, the C-text shows other signs of a greater degree of clericalisation. As Lawler points out, it contains more Latin than the B-text, and many of these new quotations are not translated, such as C xvi 306a and 339a; as we have seen, others which were furnished with a translation in the B-text stand alone in C. More of the Latin quotations in the C-text end with *etc*, such as C xvi 371a, leaving it to a knowledgeable audience to supply the remainder; but it is impossible to say whether this practice is a scribal one, or whether it goes back to Langland himself. Perhaps this increase in Latinity from the B- to the C-text suggests that Langland's attention has switched from a mixed audience of clergy and laity in the B-text to a largely clerical one in the C-text, possibly as a result of the Peasants' Revolt. This seems to be supported by the abandonment of Haukyn's English name in the C-text in favour of

[67] 1991, p. 217.

the Latin form of his initial name in the B-text, *Activa Vita*, along with the change in his nature and profile from a sinful but repentant Everyman, with whom a lay audience could readily identify, to a worldly but negative figure who needs the guidance of Pacience. Perhaps Langland became increasingly aware of the need to valorise his English imaginative productions by reference to a wide range of Latin *auctoritates*, including Scripture, and, by the time of the C-text, to assert his orthodoxy, as official hostility to Wycliffism was increasing.

However, Langland does not rely solely on quotations, whether translated or not, in order to give the laity access to Scripture. There are paraphrases such as the parable of the Good Samaritan in B xvii 48-80, which, even with the glossing of the priest and Levite as Faith and Hope, scarcely constitutes a re-telling. Another alternative is the *circumlocutio* method which Langland also adopts on occasion. *Circumlocutio* is the most extreme version of the appropriation of the Bible by a later author. It was a method of re-telling of Biblical stories going beyond paraphrase. The intention was to stimulate devotion, often of a sentimental nature. The method was already being practised in the Pseudo-Bonaventuran writings from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, but was to bear its most prestigious fruit in the early fifteenth century in Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ.* *Circumlocutio* incorporates commentary, pious legends, material from apocryphal Gospels etc, and omits Gospel material not deemed to be relevant. These are the rhetorical practices of *amplificatio* and *abbreviatio*. The omission of certain Biblical words, phrases and even whole incidents tends to abolish the dialectical relationship between the Gospels and the contemporary political and ecclesiastical *status quo*,

leaving a domesticated, even quietist, devotion. Ghosh shows how Love uses *circumlocutio* as a substitute for the Wycliffite preference for the uncorrupted text of Scripture separate from glosses and exposition, resulting in a text devoid of anything that might be interpreted heretically or as critical of the clergy.[68]

Langland's *circumlocutiones* are also mostly to do with the life of Christ. It might be argued that the whole sequence from the Incarnation in B xvi 90 to the Resurrection in B xix 182a is a kind of pseudo-Bonaventuran text. Within it, there are doublets of earlier narratives. For example, the Nativity and Epiphany stories are retold in B xix 71-95/ C xxi 69-95, although Ymaginatif has already given his version of the Nativity (B xii 140-54), and Book of the Epiphany (B xviii 236-40). In each case, their interpretation brings in additional material foreign to the traditional interpretation, for example Ymaginatif's setting of Jesus' birth in a "burgeis place" and his ascription of learning to the shepherds, discussed above, Book's drawing on the *Gospel of Nicodemus,* and Conscience's account of Jesus' miracles in B xix 108 - 133, parts of which read like a parody of the *vitae Christi*. This will be treated more fully in chapter eight. Ymaginatif's version of the Nativity is so bizarre that it too reads like a parody, possibly using a genuine quotation from an unknown source (or perhaps no source at all): "Ne in none beggers cote was that barn born,/ But in a burgeis place, of Bethlem the beste:/ *Set non erat locus in diversorio – et pauper non habet diversorium*" [69] (B xii 146-7a). The second part of line 147a is a *non sequitur.* Ymaginatif is implying an identification between God and the middle-classes which

[68] 2001, pp. 149-52.
[69] There was no room in the inn – and a pauper does not own an inn.

excludes any concern or compassion for beggars. He seems to be trying to insinuate a community of interest between the ecclesiastical elite and the newly-literate middle-classes against heretics and the politically disaffected. A. V. C. Schmidt, however, regards these lines as a piece of anti-mendicancy; if Joseph and Mary were seeking accommodation at an inn, they could not have been beggars.[70] Ymaginatif seems to be saying that Jesus was in fact born in the inn, before adding (in Latin) that there was no room there. But this defies the logic of the Biblical Nativity story (Luke 2: 1-20) which clearly suggests an identification, not just between God and the human race in general, but specifically with the poor. Significantly, Ymaginatif's omission of the words *reclinavit eum in praesepio*[71] and *eis*[72] leads one to observe that Lady Mede is not the only character to quote the Bible selectively. Perhaps Ymaginatif's treatment of the story foreshadows the lord who appropriates the Cardinal Virtues for his own material ends (B xix 467-8).

Another *circumlocutio* occurs in B viii 27- 56, where the friars allude to the Stilling of the Storm for their "forbisene", but draw a conclusion from it concerning free will that does not follow from the story, thus illustrating the danger of avoiding the literal sense by the use of *circumlocutio*. Langland's use of *circumlocutio* is not therefore uncritical. Far from eviscerating the challenge of the Gospels, on the contrary he gives us the powerful, confrontational scene of the Harrowing of Hell.

A more positive and less conservative use of *cirumlocutio* is to inculturate the

[70] 1995, p. 456.
[71] And she laid him in a manger.
[72] For them.

world of the New Testament in that of the author's contemporaries, a practice made easier by the absence of the inhibitions created by the modern historical sense. One example in *Piers Plowman* is the image of the Christ-knight, riding to joust in Jerusalem (B xviii 10-20). Others include the re-telling of the parables of the Great Feast in B xi 189-95, and Dives and Lazarus in C xix 225-49. Langland seems to exhibit a preference for parables whose literal meanings, in the pre-Lyran sense, are ethical rather than theological, thus avoiding the possible charge of using the Bible to incite heresy. Langland was by no means unique in attempting inculturation; the author of the Wakefield *Secunda Pastorum*, although its present text dates from considerably later, depicts the Nativity as if it were happening in a contemporary time and location. The result is a critique, not of society as a whole, but of certain secular participants in it. But the impression is left that *circumlocutio* represents not merely an extreme form of interpretation, but glossing as an ideologically-motivated human practice out of control of the actual intention of the divine author, the recuperation of which was given no serious effort.

Finally, there are signs that linguistic confusion was a serious contemporary problem. There was clearly an urgent need to have legal documents translated into English, so that people could not hide behind their ignorance of Latin to break the law (B iv 142-8). But confusion is even worse confounded by the clerks who mistranslate "for the kynges profit", not the benefit of the people or the king's soul (150-1). Later, as we see from the reply of Coveitise to Repentaunce, monoglot English-speakers might affect not to understand what was being said to them, in the hope that they could get away with wrongdoing: "I wende riflynge were restitucion," quod he, "for I

lerned never rede on Book,/ And I kan no Frenssh, but of the ferthest ende of Northfolk" (B v 234-5). Coveitise's reply is one of utter *insouciance*. It implies that some laypeople use illiteracy to excuse themselves from moral behaviour on the grounds that no ethical teaching is available in English, and that no attempt is made to communicate with them. Perhaps the failure of Pacience and Conscience to translate for Haukyn, until the passage from Vincent of Beauvais in B xiv 276, is meant to be emblematic of what Langland sees as the failure of the "closed circle of clerical practitioners" to communicate with the people. But on the other hand, there were vernacular sermons, and at least Haukyn could listen. Fiona Somerset reminds us that illiteracy was not in itself a barrier to the reception of new ideas; even those who could not read themselves could listen to tracts read aloud.[73] So it is too facile to see the laity as victims of clerical snobbery. As Coveitise's words show, it sometimes suited the laity to hide behind their ignorance, real or feigned, of Latin and French. Mary Dove quotes a late fourteenth-century sermon in which the laity is castigated for leaving the study of Scripture to the clergy, though in this instance apparently without any nefarious intention.[74]

The incomprehension between Repentaunce and Coveitise is mutual, for Repentaunce has not apparently considered the possibility that Coveitise might not understand "restitucion". Though Coveitise is only an extreme instance, the problem seems to lie not merely in the instability and comparative rarity of French as used in England, but generally, in the use of "foreign" tongues by the clerical and legal

[73] 1998, p. 5.
[74] 2007. p. 13.

establishment. Latinate and Francophone power and privilege in general seem to Langland to be expensive luxuries in what he sees as a situation of social and moral near-anarchy. It seems that the lay and ecclesiastical establishment's reliance on Latin and French excluded those for whom English was their main language, who were thus abandoned to live an anarchic and lawless life. Perhaps one reason for the "pure tene" which leads Piers to tear the pardon is the fact that it is written in Latin, not English, and the priest glosses it, rather than translating. In B xix 395-406, however, where "al the commune" incredulously resists the necessity of *redde quod debes,* apparently a complete novelty to them*,* the phrase is not translated; they understand its meaning immediately. The "lewed" have now, as Fiona Somerset suggests, acquired "clergie".

Although it is often hard to establish Langland's real position in the midst of the poem's dialectic of subversion and containment, issues of accessibility and intelligibility to the laity are clearly important to him. A tension is apparent in his use of Latin. On one hand, he is prepared to use Latin to add weight and drama to his English poem and to authorise his criticism of church and society; on the other, simply by writing a theological poem in English, he is challenging the hegemony of Latin, partly because it is an obstacle to communicating the demands of God to the laity, partly because it entrenches a division between clergy and laity which disempowers, infantilises and demoralises the laity. One wonders, however, about some of Langland's English vocabulary; the demands of alliteration doubtless lead him to borrow words from other dialects than those of London and the West Midlands, and to create Latinate neologisms such as "spelunkes" (B xv 275); but was he always intelligible? There may thus have been points at which Langland's

practices conflict with his desire to increase monoglot English-speakers' access to moral teaching. The environment of *Piers Plowman* is one where Latin is no longer the unifying force its proponents traditionally claimed it to be, but an additional factor in the social and political fragmentation of the age. What Rita Copeland argues in her examination of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis* is equally relevant to *Piers Plowman*. She writes: "It is thus from within the *divisioun* of language and of history, that *Confessio Amantis* sets forth its critique of *divisioun*, of the social, political and moral disorder that results from human sin". Gower's rewriting of the *auctores* is essential for the "social and ethical rehabilitation" of England.[75] The same applies to Langland's rewritings of, and quotations from the *auctores.*

Langland's hermeneutic derives from a belief that the Bible is relevant to the lives of the laity; therefore people should have access, directly or indirectly, to English translations, so that they can be motivated to live more moral lives. A clear distinction can be drawn between the hermeneutic principles of the period of the composition of *Piers Plowman* (and the earliest Wycliffite writings) and those of the period of Archbishop Arundel's *Constitutions.* Arundel, Palmer and those who thought like them had only a negative hermeneutic, appearing not to have believed that any reform was called for, other than an increase in escapist devotion. Allowing access to the Bible in English, even the translation of a single verse, would only foment subversion. There is no concrete evidence, of course, of a specific engagement on the part of the conservatives with *Piers Plowman*; but it was obviously a popular

[75] 1991, p. 216.

text. Langland seems to be undermining academic pomposity by focalising the poem through a lazy, shiftless narrator with no defined place in any current hierarchy. The presence of the "pearls before swine" trope in Dame Studie's speech suggests that the forces of reaction were already trying to reinforce the distinction between clergy and laity even before Arundel's time, as if believing that the prospect of lay reform was intrinsically hopeless; and indeed she has nothing relevant to offer Will in his desire to know what is Dowel.

In the constant critiquing of apparently authoritative speakers, Langland seems to be applying a Ricœurian hermeneutic of suspicion to those who claim to interpret the Bible; but he stops short of applying this to the Bible itself, whose authority, together presumably with that of the *Gloss*, is taken as self-evident. The Bible and the Fathers do not, however, always speak with one voice, and one task in this study will be to identify which particular biblical and patristic strands Langland appeals to, and to what end. We have already observed an attitude to Latin which shows a concern for social and personal ethics, and a rejection of the division between clergy and laity. But it still remains to examine Langland's use of the *Gloss* in order to discern how he seeks traditional authority for his purpose. Does he, for example, accept the traditional application of the ethical teachings contained in the *Gloss* to the clergy alone, or does he extend them to the laity? We now proceed to explore the specific ethical emphases which needed vernacular expression because of their importance in restoring cohesion to English society.

THREE

LANGLAND AS ETHICIST

The previous chapter has established the urgency with which Langland perceives the need for moral reform in the life of fourteenth-century England, based on values such as the primacy of ethical behaviour, living up to the traditional expectations of the clerical calling and the need for social cohesion. It is now necessary to investigate in more detail the ethical teaching of *Piers Plowman* arising from those values, and the references and tropes he draws on to authorise them. I shall seek to show the relationship between these and the *Gloss*, and to demonstrate how his use of the *Gloss* furthers his reforming agenda. To do this, it will be necessary to examine two types of reference; firstly, those Latin Biblical quotations which are expounded in the *Gloss*; and secondly, passages in English which allude to the *Gloss*. Particularly significant will be a study of the passages in the poem which seem to come from an exegetical tradition and method different from that to which the modern reader is accustomed. This is especially relevant where the application is exclusively clerical.

So what are Langland's specific ethical concerns, and what part is played by the Biblical interpretations contained in the *Gloss* in reinforcing them? Firstly, I shall deal with matters of purely clerical relevance. Within this, Langland's first category concerns agricultural imagery. In *Piers Plowman*, ploughing predominates over other agricultural operations which are given ministerial interpretations in the Gospel parables, namely

sowing, harvesting and shepherding. However, unlike these, ploughing is given limited allegorical significance in the New Testament, as for instance in Luke 9: 62 ("nemo mittens manum ad aratrum et respiciens retro, aptus est regno Dei"[1]) and 17: 7 ("Quis autem vestrum habens servum arantem et pascentem, qui regresso de agro dicat illi: Para quod coenam, et praecinge te, et ministra mihi donec manducem et bibam[2], et post haec tu manducabis et bibes?"[3]). St Gregory the Great is the first of the Fathers to endow ploughing with allegorical significance, making it a symbol of preaching, and the ploughshare a symbol of the tongue.[4] Bede's exegesis of Luke 17: 7 is in the *Gloss*:

> Servus arans et pascens doctor est Ecclesiae, de quo dicitur: *Nemo mittens manum ad aratrum et aspiciens retro, aptus est regno* (Luc. 9) *Dei*. Et Dominus Petro dicit: *Pasce oves meas* (John 21). Qui servus de agro regreditur, cum intermisso opera praedicandi, quasi ad curiam conscientiae rediens sua dicta vel facta pertractat, cui Dominus non statim jubet ad hac vita transire, et aeterna quiete refoveri, sed domi parare quod coenet, id est post laborem apertae locutionis, humilitatem propriae conversationis exhibere, in tali enim conscientia Deus coenat. (The servant who ploughs and pastures is a teacher of the Church, of whom it is said, *No-one, putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God*. And the Lord said to Peter; *Feed my sheep*. The servant,

[1] No-one putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.
[2] Emendation mine.
[3] Which one of you, having a servant ploughing and shepherding, who, having returned from the fields, will say to him: Prepare me something to eat, and gird yourself and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterwards you will eat and drink?
[4] Stephen A. Barney, 'The Plowshare of the Tongue: the Progress of a Symbol from the Bible to *Piers Plowman*', *Medieval Studies*, 35 (1973), 261-93.

> who returns from the field, having left off the work of preaching, as if returning to the court of his conscience, goes over his words and deeds. The Lord does not immediately order him to leave this life and be revived by eternal rest, but to prepare at home something to eat, that is after the work of public speech to produce the humility of private conversation, for at such a self-examination God dines.) (PL 114, 318)

In *Piers Plowman*, ploughing is established as a motif long before Piers is introduced; in the B Prologue (20-3), the Dreamer observes ploughmen at work. During Piers's first appearance, "Plowman" is both his name and his occupation (B v 537, 634, vi 3). The only deeper significance involved at this stage is that of the ploughman as an exemplar of integrity and honest hard work.

When does ploughing begin to be allegorised in the poem? There are two schools of thought. On the one hand, David Aers, in response to Robertson and Huppé, demonstrates how Langland differs from his predecessors and contemporaries in not maintaining strict, univalent allegorical correspondences all the way through his work, instead arguing that the poem proceeds on the basis of a series of epiphanies of deeper meanings.[5] He claims that it is only later, in Passus xix, that Piers becomes an explicit spiritual and ecclesiastical symbol; only then does ploughing become a symbol of preaching, and only then does the Fathers' allegorising become relevant. At this point, Langland narrates the founding of the church on earth, idealised though the picture is, and

[5] *Piers Plowman and Christian Allegory* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975), p. 111.

shorn of many historical specificities. Allegorising ploughing as preaching, Grace proclaims: "'My prowor and my plowman Piers shal ben on erthe/ And for to tilie truthe a teeme shal he have.'/ Grace gaf Piers a teeme – foure grete oxen" (B xix 262-4). This mirrors the exegetical practice of the influential Franciscan exegete Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349). In expounding the relationship between the literal and allegorical senses of Scripture, he subsumes the allegorical sense in the literal sense, as we have seen. In line with this, Passus xix, though allegorical, is in fact based on the actual historical events.

Aers does not notice that the C-text does not follow this progression. In exhorting the prelates and princes of the Church not to be afraid of taking the Gospel all over the world, Wit explicitly quotes Gregory's image of the ploughshare of the tongue: "To tulie þe erthe with tonge and teche men to louye" (C x 198). But coming so early in the C-text, this quotation might suggest that by this stage in his writing career, Langland's sense of urgency was overcoming his artistic sense.

The other school of thought is represented by Stephen Barney. Writing two years before the publication of Aers' book, he points out that allegory appears much earlier than B xix. Firstly, we see the reinterpretation of ploughing in B vii 120 as "preieres and penaunce"; secondly, in the A-text (vi 47-114), Piers gives directions to the Castle of Truth with a wealth of allegorical detail, surely more the role of a preacher than a ploughman.[6] Furthermore, he not only explains the duties of knights and ladies, but actually sets them to work, again not a very ploughman-like role (B vi 9-54). One might

[6] 1973, 283

add that when Piers is heard of again in B xiii, he is not ploughing, but preaching. So although Aers is undoubtedly right in what he says about the ploughing in B xix, he is wrong not to give any weight to the first stirrings of allegory in Piers' earlier appearances. So while Langland is governed in Passus xix by ecclesiastical concerns in his presentation of Piers, in line with patristic images of priestly service, perhaps loyalty to the tradition of the church is not his only consideration. Like so many satirists, he may well be concerned to point out the contrast between ideal and reality, between a past golden age and a degenerate present.

Piers' status is ambiguous, as we saw from Fiona Somerset's analysis in chapter two; at one time, he is a ploughman, with a wife and children (though with rather odd allegorical names), at another a member of the clergy, at another an ideal Pope. He functions as a preacher, evangelist and confessor. He bridges the divide between clergy and laity, and embodies in his life and teaching the same ethical and spiritual ideals expected of both. The same is true of Will whose exact status, lay or clerical, is unclear in the A- and B-texts. Only in C is his clerical status, though lowly, made apparent. It will be apparent from this that the duties of the clergy, chiefly preaching, rank high among Langland's concerns. This must explain why he makes Piers a ploughman, rather than the more obvious shepherd, ranking preaching higher than pastoral care.

Another patristic image of preaching is that of the grape harvest, although in the Bible itself the image is used eschatologically, as in Matthew 20: 1-16. Langland twice

quotes Matthew 20: 4. The first comes at the end of Will's diatribe against the learned: "As clerkes of Holy Kirke that kepen Cristes tresor -/ The which is mannes soule to save, as God seith in the Gospel:/ *Ite vos in vineam meam*"[7] (B x 474-5a). The keeping of "Cristes tresor" is identified with the saving of human souls. In B xv 498-9a, however, going into the vineyard is specifically the responsibility of evangelistic preachers: "And seide it in salvacion of Sarsens and othere –/ For Cristene and uncristene, Crist seide to prechours,/ *Ite vos in vineam meam*."

The *Gloss* on Matthew 20: 1 is relevant:

> *Simile est regnum.* Ostendit per parabolam, quia primi erint novissimi, et novissimi primi. Pater iste familias conditor noster est qui habet vineam, universalem Ecclesiam, quae ab Abel usque ad ultimum electum qui in fine nasciturus esse quotquot sanctos protulit, tot palmites misit. Hic pater exiit ad excolendam vineam mane hora tertia, sexta, nona, undecima operarios conduxit a mundi hujus initio usque ad finem; ad erudiendam fidelium plebem praedicatores mittere non desistit… *Primo mane.* Manifeste coepit a primo justo aeterna mercede praedicatores ad plantandam Ecclesiam invitare. (*The kingdom is like.* He shows through the parable that the first will be last, and the last first. The father of the household is our creator who has a vineyard, the universal Church, which brings forth every saint, from Abel to the last chosen one to be born, and he sends them vine branches. This father went out in the morning to cultivate the

[7] Go you into my vineyard.

> vineyard; at the third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours, he hired labourers from the beginning of this world to the end. He does not stop sending preachers for the instruction of the people of the faithful… *The first hour of the morning.* From the first righteous man {sc. Abel} to the eternal reward, he clearly begins to call preachers to plant the Church.) (PL 114, 150)

The time envisaged here has shifted from the end of the world to the whole of history, and so the labourers are not harvesters, but those engaged in the continuing work of the vineyard. It thus becomes easier to historicise them as preachers and evangelists.

Secondly, as well as preaching, a governing and disciplining role is ascribed to the clergy. This can be observed in the speeches of Clergie, of all Will's interlocutors one of the most anti-clerical, and Ymaginatif, the most clerical. In rebuking the "correctours," Clergie alludes to Isaiah 56: 10:

> And thanne shul burel clerkes be abashed to blame yow or to greve,
> And carpen noght as thei carpe now, and calle yow doumbe houndes –
> *Canes non valentes latrare* [8] -
> And drede to wrathe yow in any word, youre werkmanshipe to lette (B x 286-8).

The full text of line 287a in the Vulgate reads: "Speculatores ejus caeci. Omnes nescierunt: universi canes muti non valentes latrare, videntes vana, dormientes et amantes

[8] Dogs who fail to bark.

somnia."[9] From Jerome onwards, the sentinels and silent dogs were identified with the clergy, an identification to be found in the *Gloss* on this verse: "*Canes*. Sicut canes gregem, sic praelati debent custodire plebem." (Just like dogs with the flock, so office-holders should guard the people.) (PL 113, 298) Whereas normally officeholders might be expected to be described as shepherds, here the comparison is with sheepdogs.

In the C-text, this speech is greatly elaborated and transferred to Piers. It forms part of the prelude to the quarrel between Piers and the priest over the pardon:

> The cause of al this caytiftee cometh of many bischopes
> That suffreth such sottes and oþere synnes regne.
> Certes, ho-so durste sygge hit, Simon *quasi dormit;*
> *Vigilate* were fayrere, for thow haste a greet charge.
> For many wakere wolues ar wroken into thy foldes;
> Thy berkeres aren as blynde that bringeth forth thy lombren,
> *Dispergentur oves,*[10] þe dogge dar nat berke.
> The tarre is vntydy þat to þe shep bylongeth;
> Here salue is of *supersedeas* in sumnoures boxes.
> Thy shep ben ner al shabbede, the wolf shyt þe wolle.

[9] His sentinels are all blind, they are completely ignorant, dumb dogs who fail to bark, seeing vain things, sleeping and loving dreams.
[10] The sheep will be scattered.

Sub molli pastore lupus lanam cacat, et grex

In-custoditus dilaceratur eo.[11]

How, herde! where is thyn hounde and thyn hardy herte

For to go worye þe wolf that the wolle fouleth? (C ix 255-268).

Piers is calling for the clergy to be more aggressive in safeguarding the flock. Shepherds appear in this passage as bishops, while the dogs represent their subordinates. A specifically anti-Dominican agenda is possible here; since the late thirteenth century, they have been known as "Dominici canes".[12]

The shepherds then become stewards who have to render account to their lord. Piers, in line 274, quotes Luke 16: 2 ("Redde racionem villicacionis"[13]). This is taken from the Parable of the Unjust Steward, which will be considered later in this chapter. Only the clergy are referred to here, but the command, in the form of *redde quod debes*, will be addressed to the "commune" in B xix/C xxi.

Lewte's views are similar to Clergie's. Both quote Psalm 49: 21 ("Existimasti inique quod ero tui similis: Arguam te, et statuam contra faciem tuam"[14]), a text authorising confrontation with sinners (B x 285, xi 95). Lewte argues that one should reprove one's brothers openly: "Ye, by Peter and by Poul," quod he, "and take hem both

[11] Under a feeble shepherd, the wolf defiles the wool, and the unguarded flock is torn by him.
[12] Dogs of the Lord. (I am grateful to Fr Fabian Radcliffe, OP., for this information.)
[13] Give an account of your stewardship.
[14] You thought wickedly, that I would be like you: I will reprove you and set before your face.

to witnesse:/ *Non oderis fraters secrete in corde suo set publice argue illos*"[15] (B xi 87a). In reply, Will quotes Matthew 7: 1 ("Nolite iudicare quemquam"[16]) in line 90, which appears to preclude anyone from passing judgement. Perhaps this is ironical, since the whole poem is a series of acts of judgement. Yet the seriousness of the quotation is reinforced by its repetition by Ymaginatif in B xii 89a, and by Pacience in B xiv 292a. The *Gloss* on the same saying in Luke 6: 37 is relevant:

> De apertis quae bono animo fieri non possunt, permittur nos judicare. (About public things which cannot be done out of a good mind, it is permissible for us to judge.) (PL 114, 264)

Lewte too argues that it is legitimate for the "lewed" to tell the truth, provided that what is uttered is already public knowledge (xi 101-2). Prelates are, however, exempted from being "correctours". This is a different distinction between clergy and laity (B xi 98-100).

In the previous chapter, we saw the evidence for Ymaginatif's clericalism; we see him in B xii taking on the chastising role, chiding Will for wasting his time in "makynge". This may be because he sees Will as a threat to the clerical dominance of literacy, for there are "bokes ynowe" (16-17). However, he ascribes discipline to God, not the clergy, in his opening words. He speaks of the rod as an instrument of punishment in God's hands:

[15] You shall not hate your brothers secretly in your heart, but condemn them openly.
[16] Do not judge anyone.

Amende thee while thow might: thow hast ben warned ofte
With poustees of pestilences, with poverte and with angers -
And with thise bitter baleises God beteth his deere children;
Quem diligo, castigo.[17]
And David in the Sauter seith, of swiche that loveth Jesus,
Virga tua et baculus tuus, ipsa me consolata sunt[18] (B xii 10-13a, A x 83-86a).

The exegesis of rod and staff as correcting sinners can be found in the *Gloss* on Psalm 22: 4, where Cassiodorus writes:

> *Virga tua*. Sexta, correctio; vel virga districtio, quae convertit vitia. Baculus gubernatio, quae sustinet fideles. (*Your rod.* Sixthly, correction; or severity, the rod which converts vices. The staff, government which sustains the faithful.) (PL 113, 876)

However, the clear sense of the Biblical text is that "rod" and "staff" are in parallel, not opposition, and both are intended to be comforting and sustaining. The second half of line 13 ("of swiche that loveth Jesus") reads like a gloss, but is not found in the *Glossa Ordinaria*.

Langland's point in quoting the *Gloss* to substantiate and authorise his criticism of

[17] Him whom I love, I chastise.
[18] Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.

the clergy and religious seems to be that the tradition of the Church's teaching and practice sets the standard for the right performance of clerical duties and following the religious life. We turn now to those ethical issues which apply to the laity as well as the clergy.

For all his clericalism, Ymaginatif's words in B xii 10-13a presuppose an unmediated relationship between God and Will, in which Will is responsible before God for the amendment of his life. Placing this speech on the lips of Ymaginatif represents a move from reliance on the heteronomous authority of the clergy to the Dreamer's own internal mental faculties. Conscience and moral reflection are no longer the preserve of the clergy, but everyone, laity included, is called to exercise them. Ymaginatif's speech marks a vital stage in Will's assumption of responsibility for himself. Even though, as we have seen, Langland's concern is first and foremost with the clergy teaching the laity, much of the ethical teaching of *Piers Plowman* is directed to both alike without distinction.

Firstly, the image of harvesting in Anima's speech demonstrates Langland's universal reforming intention:

> He {sc St Thomas à Becket} is a forbisene to alle bisshopes and a bright myrour,
> And sovereynliche to swiche that of Surrye bereth the name,
> And naught to huppe aboute in Engelond to halwe mennes auteres,
> And crepe amonges curatours and confessen ageyn the lawe;

Nolite mittere falsem in messem alienam [19] (B xv 526-9a).

The Vulgate text of this verse from Deuteronomy 23: 25 actually reads: "Si intraveris in segetem amici tui, franges spicas, et manu conteres: falce autem non metes".[20] The literal reference is to the regulation of Jewish agricultural practice, but beginning with Gregory, the passage was applied to ecclesiastical discipline, the need to maintain love and peace in the church by ensuring that each bishop or priest with a territorial ministry stays within his borders. The *Gloss* reads:

> *Si intraveris*. Sunt quaedem loca scripturae quae historialiter fidem imbuunt, quaedem moraliter sanctam conversationem instruunt; quaedem non secundum historiam, sed secundum allegoriam venerenda mysteria ostendunt. Caute ergo in segete proximi intrandum est, ut discernendo carpas cibum, non praecipitandum succisae messis incurras judicium. (*If you enter*…There are some places of Scripture which give initial instruction in the faith in historical mode; some, in moral mode teach holy conversation; others, not according to history, but according to allegory, reveal mysteries to be venerated. Beware therefore of entering your neighbour's cornfield, lest, by separating, you plunder food, and incur a hasty judgement in respect of the cut-down crop.) (PL 113, 479)

It will be noted that Gregory does not comment on the part of the verse which Langland

[19] Do not put your sickle into someone else's corn.
[20] If you enter your friend's cornfield, you may crush the ears of his corn with your hand: do not reap with your sickle.

quotes. However, his main point is clear; Langland not only accepts its validity for local practice within England, but also extends the criticism to bishops with titular sees in the Middle East, who, instead of ministering there, find lucrative work in English dioceses with bishops of their own. On close inspection, however, he seems as much concerned with the Church's failure to evangelise the Muslim world, even at the cost of persecution and martyrdom, as with abuses in England.

Surprisingly, it has not previously been noticed that the same *Gloss* seems to underlie the admission of Haukyn:

> If I yede to the plowgh, I pynched so narwe
> That a foot lond or a forow fecchen I wolde
> Of my nexte neghebore, nymen of his erthe;
> And if I rope, overreche, or yaf hem reed that ropen
> To seise to me with hir sikel that I ne sew nevere (B xiii 371-5).

This may look like Robertson and Huppé's practice of over-interpreting a single word, in this case "sikel", but the rest of the context is so similar to the passage from the *Gloss* on Deuteronomy 23: 25 that one is led to deduce that Langland is here paraphrasing the Latin into English for the edification of the laity. The clerical transgressor of boundaries is thus equated with the unscrupulous layman. Langland seems, then, to be seeking to widen the application of the *Gloss*, seeing the whole of English society as involved in avaricious practice of one kind or another. Without good clerical example, can any better

be expected of the laity? So, as well as a translation into English, we also have a translation from the world of the clergy into that of the laity, as Gregory had carried out the reverse in the sixth century. Haukyn's reference to ploughing is also noteworthy, for even in the ploughman's Arcadia, there is greed and self-seeking. So Langland not only draws on the authority of the *Gloss* to substantiate his critique of the clergy, but extends it to the laity as part of a programme of reform of society as a whole.

But the clergy do not escape. Anima has a tirade against their readiness to accept alms from dubious characters and the favouritism that results:

> Gooth to the glose of the vers, ye grete clerkes;
> If I lye on yow to my lewed wit, ledeth me to brennyng!
> For as it semeth ye forsaketh no mannes almesse –
> Of usurers, of hoores, of avarouse chapmen –
> And louten to these lordes that mowen lene yow nobles
> Ayein youre rule and religion. I take record at Jesus
> That seide to hise disciples, "*ne sitis acceptores personarum*"[21] (B xv 82-88).

The command comes from James 2: 1, but is also found in the *Gloss* on Matthew 20: 23, which doubtless explains why Anima attributes it to Christ. The *Gloss* on James reinforces its content:

[21] Do not be respecters of persons.

> Mundus pauperem abjicit, divitem colit; fides Christi econtra docet quia omnis gloria divitum tanquam flos fenit, misericordia in pauperes floret in aeternum. (The world casts down the poor man, and venerates the rich; the faith of Christ teaches the opposite because all the glory of the rich will flourish like the flower of the field, but mercy on the poor will blossom for ever.) (PL 114, 673)

The belief that God values, not status, a person's way of life, is consistent with the poem's outlook, as we shall see later in the verses on the poor. The friars have aligned themselves with the worldly, who venerate the rich, and have abandoned the faith of Christ.

Secondly, Jesus's saying in Matthew 5: 13 forms part of Anima's argument for the clergy to set a better example:

> "Salt saveth catel," siggen thise wyves;
> "*Vos estis sal terre* [22] ...
> The hevedes of Holy Chirche – and thei holy were –
> Crist calleth hem salt for Cristene soules,
> *Et si sal evanuerit, in quo salietur*?"[23] (B xv 428-30a).

Anima reiterates that priests, preachers and the Pope should be "Goddes salt" in line 441.

[22] You are the salt of the earth.
[23] And if salt has lost its saltness, by what means will it be salted?

The *Gloss* on this verse also applies this saying to the "hevedes of Holy Chirche":

> Hic jam ostenditur apostolorum officium, scilicet quod sunt sal terrae et lux mundi. Hoc specialiter ad apostolos, qui praedictis virtutibus, paupertate scilicet et aliis, debent ornari ut sint sal optimum condientes alios doctrina, et vitae suae exemplo. Sal, salus a corruptione. Unde propheta: *Posui te in lucem gentium, ut sis salus mea usque ad extrema terrae*. (Here now is revealed the office of apostles; namely that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. This especially refers to the apostles who should be endowed with the aforesaid virtues, clearly poverty, and the others, so that they may be the best salt, flavouring others by their teaching and by the example of their lives. Salt, salvation from corruption. Whence the prophet: *I have made you as a light to the nations, that you may be my salvation to the ends of the earth*.) (PL 114, 91)

Anima then extends the application of the verse to the faithful in general, to their need to have the clergy set them a good example:

> Ac fressh flessh outher fish, whan it salt failleth,
> It is unsavoury for soothe, ysoden or ybake;
> So is mannes soule, soothly, that seeth no good ensample
> Of hem of Holi Chirche that the heigh way sholde teche
> And ne gide, and go before as a good banyer,
> And hardie hem that bihynde ben, and yyve hem good evidence (431-436).

Without that good example, the life of the laity will also be "unsavoury". The same realisation of the effects of the bad example of the clergy on the laity is to be found in Anima's quotation from Pseudo-Chrysostom in lines 117a ff (C xvi 271a ff).

Thirdly, there is the question of the labourer's reward. Theologie, objecting to the wedding of Lady Mede and Fals, takes this up, quoting Luke 10: 7:

> For Mede is muliere, of Amendes engendred;
> And God graunted to gyve Mede to truthe,
> And thow hast given her to a gilour - now God gyve thee sorwe!
> The text telleth thee noght so, Truthe woot the soothe,
> For *dignus est operarius* [24] his hire to have (B ii 119-23).

God intended that Mede should have been given to Truth, the *operarius* who is intended here. This suggests a purely secular reward. But the "text" of the *Gloss* adds a heavenly reward to the secular one, and its audience is clerical:

> *Dignus est enim*. Nota quod uni operi praedicatorem duae mercedes debentur: una in via, quae nos in labore sustentat; alia in patria, quae nos in resurrectione remunerat. (*He is worthy*. Note that for one work, two rewards are owed to the preacher; one on the journey, which sustains us in our work, the other in our homeland which is our reward in the resurrection.) (PL 114, 284)

[24] The labourer is worthy…

The saying has been taken out of its context in the missionary address of Luke 10 and secularised, illustrating the cynicism with which the church's mission was so widely regarded, including by the laity.

Fourthly, the virtue of vigilance is required from all, though, as we have seen, Piers tells the priest alone, "*Vigilate* were fayrer" (C ix 258). In introducing himself to Will, Ymaginatif tells him:

> I have folwed thee, in feith, thise five and fourty winter,
> And manye tymes have meved thee to mynne on thyn ende,
> And how fele fernyeres are faren and so fewe to come
> And of thi wilde wantownesse tho thow yong were,
> To amende it in thi myddel age, lest myghte the faille
> In thyn olde elde, that yvele kan suffer
> Poverte or penaunce, or preyeres bidde:
> *Si non in prima vigilia nec in secunda…*[25] (B xii 3-8a).

In the *Gloss* on this verse, from Luke 12: 38, St Gregory writes:

> *Vigilantes*. Vigilat qui oculos apertos in vero lumine tenet, ut tenebras negligentiae evitet; qui etiam quod credidit operator, qui sollicitus est in cura gregis sibi commissi. Quid vero vigilantibus debeatur subdit: "Amen dico vobis".

[25] If not in the first watch, nor in the second…

> *Et si venerit in secunda*. Vigilias vocat a similitudine excubantium. In nocte hujus mundi semper debemus esse contra hostem solliciti, et exspectare lucem venturam, id est adventus judicis. Prima ergo vigilia custodia pueritiae est, secunda juventatis, tertia senectutis. Si quis vero in pueritia vigilare neglexerit, non tamen desperet, sed etiam in juventute vel saltem tandem in senectute resipiscat, quia pius judex moras nostras patienter exspectat. (*The watchers*. He who keeps his eyes open for the true light keeps awake, in order to avoid the darkness of negligence; he also practices what he believes, he is solicitous in the care of the flock entrusted to him. He declares what is the true duty of the watchers: "Truly I say to you." *And if he should come in the second.* He describes the watchers as sentinels. In the night of this world, we always ought to be on guard against the enemy and look for the coming of the light, that is, the coming of the judge. Therefore the first watch is the guardianship of boyhood, the second of young manhood, the third of seniority. If anyone truly neglects to be vigilant in boyhood, all the same he should not give up hope, but even in young manhood, or, at least eventually, become reasonable once more in senior years, because the righteous judge patiently overlooks our ways.) (PL 114, 298).

Though Ymaginatif reverses Gregory's mild and pastoral approach, his application of the three watches to the stages of Will's life directly echoes Gregory, and it is apparent that it is Will's need for repentance, not the clergy's, that is in focus here. Though his words address Will at the onset of old age, Ymaginatif invokes the authority of the *Gloss* to warn all worldly people, whatever their age, of their need to repent. Though Gregory's

exposition is primarily relevant to the clergy, nevertheless, the importance of personal responsibility for one's own way of life, clerical or lay, is also evident.

Fifthly, by contrast with vigilance, there is the symbolism of sleep as spiritual blindness. There is ambiguity here; while sleep is associated with the darkness of sin in Scripture, and Will's besetting sin is Sloth (B i 141a, v 441a), his dreams are nevertheless a medium of enlightenment and self-discovery. It is during this sleep to the external world (and twice to his internal world), and through his encounters with his inner self, that Will is awakened to the reality of the world he inhabits.

In Pacience's diatribe against the rich having their reward already on earth, which includes the quotation from Deuteronomy 23: 25 examined earlier, he speaks of something unreal and impermanent about riches as if they belong to the world of sleep. His audience is Haukyn, who functions as a type of the layman to whom moral exhortation, originally intended for the clergy, is now directed:

> Ac God is of a wonder wille, by that kynde wit sheweth
> To yvve many men his mercymonye er he it have deserved.
> Right so fareth God by some riche; ruthe me it thynketh –
> For thei han hir hire heer, and hevene, as it were
> (And is grete likynge to lyve withouten labour of bodye)
> And whan he dyeth, ben disallowed, as David seith in the Sauter:

Dormierunt et nichil invenerunt.[26]

And in another stede also, *Velud sompnium surgencium*,

Domine, in civitate tua, ad nichilum [eorum rediges ymaginem][27] (B xiv 125 - 131a).

In the *Gloss* on the first of these verses, Psalm 75: 5, Cassiodorus expresses a similar identification of sleep with self-deceiving riches:

> *Dormierunt*. A bonis aeternis refrigescentes, carni acquieverunt, profutura non videntes. *Somnum suum*, qui distat a quiete bonorum; quia iste fallax est; videntes per somnium se habere thesauros, dum evigilant nihil inveniunt, unde dicit: *Et nihil invenerunt omnes viri divitiarum*. Definitio avarorum. *Nihil invenerunt*. Quia nihil posuerunt in manibus Christi, qui dicit: *Esurivi* etc. (*They were asleep*. Cooling towards the good things of eternity, they submitted to the flesh, not seeing the future. *Their sleep*, which differs from the repose of the good; because the former is deceitful; those who, seeing themselves in a dream as possessing treasures, find nothing when they wake up. Hence it says: *And all men find nothing in riches*. Definition of the avaricious; *they find nothing*, because they put nothing in the hands of Christ, who says, '*I was hungry*' etc.) (PL 113, 963)

This is an example of the quotation of the *Gloss* to criticise those who, like Haukyn, are

[26] They were asleep and found nothing.
[27] Like the dream of those who are rising, Lord, in your city, you will bring their image to nothing.

avaricious, without distinction between clergy and laity. Here sleep is seen as a spiritual danger, the dream as inherently false and deceptive. At the beginning of the poem, Will's sleep is that of someone who has cooled to the good things of eternity and by default adopted a deceitful scale of values, and the *Visio* leaves him untouched in his sloth and aimlessness. But during the *Vitae,* his dreams are the vehicle of spiritual growth and his ability to grasp salvation. However, he never becomes rich and never reveals himself as avaricious.

Sixthly, we have the image of the mirror. According to Debra Shuger, mirrors in renaissance literature do not reveal the individual face; they provide "an exemplary image, either positive or negative".[28] Anima's citation of Thomas à Becket as a "myrour" to bishops provides a medieval example of a positive mirror (B xv 526). But Will is the one who focuses the significance of the mirror. In B xi 9, Fortune carries him off into the Land of Longynge: "And in a mirour that highte Middelerthe she made me to beholde". One does not, of course, use a mirror to look at the outside world, so what Langland means to convey here is that one can see one's own moral reality in and through the world around us. He plays on the ambivalent use of the mirror, for self-deception as well as self-revealing. This particular mirror is a moral trap for Will:

> Than hadde Fortune folwynge hire two fair damyseles:
> *Concupiscentia carnis* men called the elder mayde,

[28] 'The 'I' of the Beholder: Renaissance Mirrors', in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, ed. by Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 22.

And Coveitise of Eighes ycalled was that oother.

Pride of Parfyt Lyvynge pursued hem bothe,

And bad me for my contenaunce acounten Clergie lighte (B xi 12-16).

The three personifications come from I John 2: 16 ("Omne quod est in mundo, concupiscentia carnis est, concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vitae"[29]), but the mirror in the context of self-deception comes from James 1: 23: ("si quis auditor est verbi et non factor, hic conparabitur viro consideranti vultum nativitatis suae in speculo"[30]). The same cross-reference between the two passages is found in the *Gloss* on James 1: 23*,* together with a reference to verse 27 ("Religio munda et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem, haec est visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum, et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc saeculo"[31]):

Consideranti vultum. Qui proponit in animo suo considerare in scripturis quasi in speculo vultum nativitatis, qualiter homo sit natus, quam fragilis, vel quid futurus, quam brevis aevi, in quantis miseriis positus, compunctionem magnam et voluntatem poenitendi contraxit; sed statim, aliqua tentatione seductus, obliviscitur compunctionis, et ad peccata redit. Hujus inconstantiae comparat eum qui libenter verbum audit, et implere negligit. Et est similitudo inter illum qui sponte sua sine doctore se ad scripturas applicuit, et illum qui ab alio scripturas

[29] For everything in the world is lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life.
[30] If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at the face of his countenance in a mirror.
[31] Religion that is pure and undefiled in the presence of God and the Father is to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself undefiled by this world.

> audit, cum neuter impleverit… *Et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc saeculo*. Per saeculum intellegit mundum, seu omnia quae sunt in mundo, ut sint concupiscentia carnis, et oculorum, et superbia vitae. (*Observing his face.* He proposes in his mind to meditate on the Scriptures, like the features of his countenance in a mirror, what kind of man he was born, how fragile; or what is his future, how short his life, placed amidst how many miseries. He has experienced great compunction and desire for repentance; but immediately, overcome by another temptation, he forgets compunction and returns to his sins. He exemplifies a man of this fickleness who freely hears the word and neglects to fulfil it. There is also a resemblance between a man who, of his own accord, without a teacher, applies himself to the scriptures, and him who hears the Scriptures from someone else, when neither fulfils them… *And keep oneself unspotted from the age*. By age, he means the world or everything which is in the world, namely the lust of the flesh and of the eyes, and the pride of life.) (PL 114, 673)

The association of these verses is unsurprising, since the Catholic Epistles are generally to be found in the same manuscripts, including one formerly in Worcester Cathedral Library, now London, British Library, Royal 2, D xxvi. The linking of the three texts in the *Gloss* suggests close dependence on Langland's part. Perhaps in protest against the *Gloss*'s concentration on keeping oneself unspotted from the world, Wit has already mentioned the other half of the verse, the Church's obligation to widows and orphans: "Fooles that fauten Inwit, I fynde that Holy Chirche/ Sholde fynden hem that hem fauteth

and faderlese children,/ And widewes that han noght wherewith to wynnen hem hir foode" (B ix 67-9). Neither in B xi, nor C xi 171, nor the B-text vision of Myddelerd which is placed in the setting of a mirror in C xiii 131, does Will see Christ or charity, least of all his true self. But later, in response to Anima's words in B xv, Will complains that he has never found "ful charite"; on the contrary, people seem to be mostly animated by covetousness. Then he adds: "Clerkes kenne me that Crist is in alle places:/ Ac I seigh hym never soothly but as myself in a mirour:/ *Hic in enigmate, tunc facie ad faciem*" [32] (161-2a). Here the mirror transforms Will's self-understanding. It is not the sinful reality of the world, but the image of Christ within himself that the mirror discloses. The *Gloss* on this verse, from I Corinthians 13: 12, identifies the soul with a mirror, whereby it might know God: "*Speculum* est anima. Speculum vi cuius aliquo modo Deum noscimus, sed obscura." (*The mirror* is the soul. A mirror by the power of which we know God, to some extent, but obscurely.) (PL 114, 543)

Langland's contemporary, the devotional writer Walter Hilton, expresses a similar idea:

> For this soule is but a myroure, in the whiche thou schalt seen God goostli. And therefore thou schalt first finden thi myrour and kepen it bright and clene from fleschli filthe and wordli vanyté and holden it wel up from the erthe, that thou mai seen it, and oure Lord therinne also.[33]

[32] Now darkly, then face to face.

Similarly, Will's encounters with his own higher faculties reveal to him not only the knowledge of how to be saved, but also the ability to gain salvation, faculties which have all along been latent within him. Here again, no distinction is made between the clergy and the laity, either in the *Gloss* or in *Piers Plowman*. The *Gloss* not only sets the standard of moral interpretation of Scripture for the clergy, but for the laity as well.

Seventhly, we have the image of the Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of charity. Dame Studie contrasts the voracious appetites of the masters of theology with ordinary people's concentration on God's mercy and works: "God is as muche in the gorge of thise grete maistres,/ Ac amonges meene men his mercy and his werkes" (B x 66-7). Here a distinction is drawn between clergy and laity. By contrast with the clergy, humble laypeople are seen as capable of genuine charity. She goes on to cite Psalm 131: 6: "And so seith the Sauter – I have seighen it [in *Memento*]:/ *Ecce audivimus eam in Effrata; invenimus eam in campis silve*" [34] (68-a), before again highlighting the contrast between clergy who talk about God, and humble men whose devotion is heartfelt: "Clerkes and othere kynnes men carpen of God faste,/ And have hym muche in hire mouth, ac meene men in herte" (69-70). So, according to Dame Studie, the laity who have thoroughly internalised the presence of God embody an ideal against which to measure the clergy. Whereas the context of the psalm gives the Ark of the Covenant as the meaning of *eam*, Dame Studie accepts the *Gloss*'s interpretation of it as charity, an identification made explicitly in C xi 51-a: "And so seith þe sauter, y say hit in *Memento:*/ *Ecce audivimus*

[33] *The Scale of Perfection,* ed. by Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University Press, 2000), p. 206.
[34] Behold, we heard it was in Ephrathah; we found it in the clearing of the wood.

eam (i. e. caritatem) in Effrata." The relevant passage in the *Gloss,* from St Augustine, reads:

> *Ecce audivimus eam in Effrata: invenimus eam in campis silvae*. *Introibimus*. Nos quoque perseverando in militia nostra tamen introivimus (vel introibimus) in tabernaculum ejus Dei Jacob: ad hanc domum pertinet, qui aliis tanquam vivis lapidibus charitate compaginatus est. Intrat ergo qui diligit, et qui intrat, domus Dei efficitur. *In loco.* Domus Dei est, ubi debet adorari; praeter quam non audit Deus ad vitam aeternam. Ille ad domum pertinet qui est charitate compaginatus aliis. Vel locus in quo stant pedes domus Domini, Christus est in quo perseverant. (*We heard of it in Ephrathah; we found it in the clearing of the wood. Let us enter.* We too shall enter the tabernacle of the God of Jacob by persevering in our struggle. He belongs to this dwelling, he who is bound together with others like living stones. Therefore he who loves enters, and he who enters is made the house of God. *In the place*. The house of God is where he should be worshipped, outside which God does not hear in order to give eternal life. He who is built together with others in love belongs to the house. Or the place in which his feet stand is the house of the Lord, which is Christ, in whom they persevere.) (PL 113, 1051)

Without explicitly making the distinction between the learned and the humble laity, the *Gloss* on this verse and the next extols charity as the virtue that binds together the people of God. This implies that there should be no difference between clergy and laity. The same text reappears in Anima's speech, but this time in the context of the mission to

Muslims:

> Ac he who beth that excuseth hem that arn persons and preestes
> (That hevedes of Holy Chirche ben) that han hir wil here
> Withouten travaille the tithe deel that trewe men biswynken –
> Thei wol be wroth for I write thus – ac to witnesse I take
> Both Matthew and Mark and *Memento Domine David:*
> *Ecce audivimus e[a]m in Effrata…* (B xv 485-90a).

Anima's point is that the clergy receive their tithes without any effort on their part, specifically no effort to look for charity. Here only Augustine's interpretation of *eam* as charity makes convincing sense.

In the same passage, Pacience's reference to the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31) (B xiv 121-4, C xv 300-4), and the Samaritan's reference to the same parable in B xvii 265-70 (C xix 228-249) apply to the laity as well as the clergy. The second passage from the C-text is particularly interesting, because of the quotation of Luke 16: 9 in line 245a: "*Facite vobis amicos de mammona iniquitatis*" [35] (239-45a). The *Gloss* is perhaps the origin of the connection between this verse and the parable:

> *Homo quidam*. Contra derisores avaros quod proposuit exemplo astruit, scilicet

[35] Make for yourselves friends of the Mammon of wickedness.

quod dives apud inferos torquetur, qui Lazarum non fecit sibi amicum, a quo posset recepi in aeterna tabernacula. (*A certain man.* Against greedy scoffers, he declares what he puts forward by way of example, namely that the rich man, who did not make a friend for himself in Lazarus, by whom he might be received into eternal habitations, is tormented among the dead.) (PL 114, 316)

It can be shown definitively that Langland only draws directly on the *Gloss* a few times; in yoking together the commentaries on I John 2: 16 and James 1: 23 and 27; in the encroachment of Haukyn on his neighbour's field; and in the explicit identification, in one manuscript of the C-Text at any rate, of *eam* with *caritatem*. But so often, as the other examples investigated in this chapter have also shown, his pastoral and ethical standpoints, chiefly the need for charity and the importance of preaching and of clerical example, are consistent with those to be found in the *Gloss*. It is surely significant that four of these passages are taken from the speech of Anima, suggesting an affinity between Will's highest faculty and the teaching of the *Gloss.* Two others are from Ymaginatif's speech. In spite of the deconstruction visited on him in the previous and later chapters, Ymaginatif seems at times to be conveying some of the ethical burden of the poem. The image of the mirror in B xi is created by a much less educative figure, namely Fortune; but this too is a crucial moment in the poem, where Will through his own folly is made to learn a negative lesson from his experience in the Land of Longing.

Langland's appeal to the moral sense of Scripture represents a reaction against its debasement by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century glossators. His positive use of the *Gloss* is thus essentially conservative. The standards he upholds are inherited from the past; so

are his exemplars, such as the monastic saints that Anima lists in B xv 420-1. He draws upon the *Gloss* to authorise and validate his high expectations of the way of life, primarily of the clergy but also the laity, and on the institutional level no less than on the personal. His citations from the *Gloss* are not random, but show signs of a concentrated desire to transform the ethical culture of both clergy and laity.

But Langland does not confine himself to ethics in a pure sense. He also uses the poem to scrutinise a number of the Church's doctrines, as elaborated and sometimes distorted by the Fathers, assessing them on the basis of their ethical implications and effects. Ethical themes discussed in this chapter, such as concupiscence and charity, are thus subsumed into a deeper theological examination. In the following chapters, I propose to examine these doctrinal scrutinies, with a view to uncovering the extent of Langland's focus on their ethical productivity, and his attempts to use the Bible and the *Gloss* to counteract distortions. The process is not pain-free for Langland, for by scrutinising doctrines, he becomes vulnerable to the charge of heresy, which he seems to acknowledge in the opening verses of the Prologue, where he portrays himself dressed in sheep's clothing, like a "heremite unholy of werkes". The allusion is doubtless to Matthew 7: 15 ("Attendite a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus sunt lupi rapaces"[36]). The *Gloss* reads:

> *Attendite*. Licet hoc de omnibus qui aliud habitu et sermone, aliud opere ostendunt, possit accipi; tamen specialiter de haereticis qui quadam pietatis veste

[36] Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inside, they are ravening wolves.

> tecti, venenato animo et intentione nocendi lupi sunt rapaces, vel exterius, si copia datur persequendo, vel interius corrumpendo. (*Beware.* This applies to all who show one thing by habit or word, another by their works, it can be accepted; yet, especially where heretics are concerned, who, covered by a garment of piety, poisoned in soul and with the intention of harming, are ravening wolves, either externally by following, if opportunity is given, or internally by corrupting.) (PL 114, 110)

The phrase "by clothing ne by carpynge" found in B xi 237 and C xvi 338, though its tenor is neutral, seems to echo "habitu et sermone". The wolf in sheep's clothing trope is always used in the Gospels in relation to the vulnerability of Christ's flock. So Will self-deprecatingly appropriates the misinterpretation of himself as a danger to the flock, when in reality he only seeks to recall them to following the Christian way. Though as we shall see, Langland is not unorthodox, he could easily have aroused the alarm of strictly orthodox clerics.

FOUR

PREDESTINATION AND FREE WILL

Belief in human free will is common to many of the world's most insightful story-tellers. Essential to their narratives or dramas is a central character, whose exercise of personal autonomy is the pivot on which the course of the story hinges. This is especially true for those who write with an overt ethical purpose, amongst whom, we have established, Langland must obviously be included. *Piers Plowman* is the story of the Dreamer's quest for salvation, and significantly his name, Will, suggests decisions and actions. In the light of this, the question is raised of the theological underpinnings of Langland's belief in free will. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how he presents the reality and value of free will, how he treats the doctrine of predestination, and where he positions himself in relation to contemporary debates; in particular, to what extent his theology of free will is consistent with the *Gloss*.

On belief in human free will depends the inculcation of ethical behaviour; there is no point in trying to motivate people to live a good life, unless the moralist believes the hearer or reader is free to change. This is so even if the moralist believes in the ineluctable badness of humanity; he may try and terrify people into doing good. If his belief is more moderate, he will want to win people to God by drawing attention to his attractiveness, whereas hard-liners do not believe humans have enough in them to see

that attractiveness. The same is also true of missionary preaching, another interest of Langland's.

At least theoretically, the most important theological authority for the western Church in the late Middle Ages was St Augustine of Hippo, who in the early fifth century combated the belief, traditionally imputed to the British monk Pelagius and therefore called Pelagianism, that human beings, having complete free will, can earn salvation by living an ethical life. Augustine found Pelagianism incompatible with the freedom and the grace, indeed the majesty of God, for he believed that God's omnipotence cannot be limited by an obligation to grant salvation to human beings on the basis of merit. Instead, far from being meritorious, Augustine regards human beings as so steeped in sin, inherited from Adam's original sin, that it is impossible for them to merit salvation; the human race is a mass of perdition which may even include some who have lived part of their lives *bene pieque,*[1] and may even have been baptised.[2] This issue will be treated more fully in chapter six. As for the saved, Augustine insists that God simply chooses or predestines people for heaven before they are born. This means that he has, as it were, no need to wait to see what they will do with their lives.

Augustine does, however, concede in theory the reality of human free will; the commandments of God would be pointless if people were not free to obey them, but

[1] Well and piously.
[2] PL 44, 925.

this can only happen if they are freed by the Son:

> in bono autem liber esse nullus potest nisi fuerit liberatus ab eo qui dixit, *Si vos Filius liberavit, tunc vere liberi eritis.* (No-one, however, can be free for the good, unless he has been set free by him who said, *If the Son has set you free, then you will be free indeed.*) (PL 44, 917)

So the question is raised as to why God sets some people free and not others. The answer is that it is solely a matter of divine predestination. This raises two difficulties; firstly, the fate of those who are not predestined to eternal life, and secondly, the grounds on which they are not chosen. Though Augustine asserts that God is responsible for the hardness of heart of the unrighteous by not imparting his mercy to them, he denies that he is therefore responsible for their wickedness. The *Gloss* on Romans 9: 18 is not assigned to Augustine, though it owes much to a passage from one of his letters:

> *Ergo cujus vult*. Meritum misericordiae nullum est, meritum obdurationis peccatum massae totius damnatae. Nec obdurat impartiendo malitiam, sed non impartiendo misericordiam, sicut nec digni sunt, quod facit aequitate occulta; et ab humanis sensibus remota, quia non aperit Apostolus sed miratur: O altitudo divitiarum. (*Whomever he wills.* No merit is involved in mercy; there is merit in hardening the sin of the whole damned mass. But he does not harden by imparting malice, but by not imparting mercy, as they are not worthy, because he

> acts by a hidden justice; and one removed from human senses, because the Apostle does not explain, but marvels: O the height of the riches!) (PL114, 501; 33, 879)

Though he does not say so, the implication is that the free will of the unrighteous is intact enough for them to choose wickedness, which is inconsistent with the alleged absence of free will in the previous quotation.

One danger in predestination is antinomianism, the belief that the Christian is not bound to live ethically. If salvation is assured by predestination, then it does not matter how one lives; and if not predestined, one might as well live immorally. Though much later, the nineteenth-century Scots novelist James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is an excellent literary illustration of this. The central character, once convinced he is one of the elect, falls into the hands of the devil and murders various family members. Augustine, however, insists that no human knows who the elect are:

> Quis enim ex multitudine fidelium, quamdiu in hac mortalitate vivitur, in numero praedestinatorum se esse praesumat? (Who then, out of the number of the faithful, as long as he lives in this mortal state, presumes to think that he is in the number of the predestined?) (PL 44, 940-1)

The number of the elect has therefore been fixed from all eternity, as is stated slightly earlier: "Certum vero esse numerum electorum, neque augendum, neque

minuendum."[3] (PL 44, 940)

Another danger is the inconsistency between God's plan of universal salvation, as expressed in I Timothy 2: 4 ("Qui omnes homines vult salvos fieri, ad agnitionem veritatis venire"[4]), and the deliberate hardening of the hearts of the unrighteous.

A third danger is that of elitism, though Pelagianism is in a different way also open to this charge. Elitism is of necessity divisive. If humanity is divided between the elect and the reprobate, regardless of whether individuals are conscious of what their eternal destiny will be, the division creates an obstacle to social cohesion, in which all are on the same footing before God, in which all possess the same potential for ethical behaviour.

Whatever subsequent Councils may have decreed in support of Augustinian doctrine, the Church could not in practice go along with it in its hard-line form, because of the risks of depriving the faithful of the motivation to live ethically, and of being construed as encouraging antinomianism, however vigorously Augustine tried to defend himself against the charge. The pulpit and the confessional both demand that people should change, and change for the better. Rebecca Harden Weaver in fact attributes the Church's abandonment of strict predestinarianism in late antiquity to the

[3] The number of the chosen is certainly fixed, neither to be increased nor reduced.
[4] Who wills that all humanity should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

fact that "predestination had proved unpreachable".[5] So arose, contemporaneously with St Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism, which, as the name implies, was a mediating position between Augustine and Pelagius. Its essence is that human free will is strong enough for at least the beginning of faith to be attributed to it, while its subsequent growth depends on God's grace assisting free will. Natural human goodness is allowed some claim on the mercy of God, and the justified person can persevere to the end ("final perseverance") by his or her own efforts. It is not that good works merit salvation; but of his grace, God accepts them. So, to be fully salvific, human merit needs God's grace. Whatever its other limitations, Semi-Pelagianism is based on a belief that God's government of the world is a moral one.

Not much of Augustine's teaching on predestination found its way into the *Gloss*. But the *Gloss* on Romans 8: 29-30 ("Nam quos praescivit et praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii ejus…quos autem praedestinavit hos et vocavit et quos vocavit hos et justificavit quos autem justificavit illos et glorificavit"[6]), though not attributed to Augustine, contains doctrine very similar to a passage in the *De Correptione et Gratia*: [7]

> *Vocavit.* Vocatio exterior fit per praedicatores et est communis bonorum et malorum. Interior vero tantum electorum. De exteriori dicitur: *Multi sunt vocati,*

[5] *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), p. 239.
[6] For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son…and those whom he predestined, he indeed called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified.
[7] ix 23 (PL 44, 929-30).

pauci vero electi. Vocatione impletur praedestinatio. Vocare, est cognitionem de fide adjuvare vel compungere eum quem faciat audire, et hoc est tantum electorum. *Magnificavit.* Hoc de praescitis, de aliis non, qui etsi ad tempus credant et boni videantur, tamen quia non permanent, non magnificantur. *Magnificavit* vel *magnificabit*. Hoc autem futurum est, sed dicitur praeteritum; qui dicitur Deus fecisse quae ab aeterno disposuit facere. Talibus omnia in bonum, etiam quod deviant, ut inde cautiores sint, et in se non confidentes. Sunt hic quattuor memorata: praedestinatio, vocatio, justificatio, magnificatio. Unum est in Deo, et tria in nobis. Praedestinatio enim nostra non in nobis est, sed in occulto apud ipsum in ejus praescientia. Tria vero reliqua in nobis sunt. (*He called*. The external calling comes through preachers and is common to good and bad people. The internal, on the other hand, belongs solely to the chosen. Of the external it is said, *Many are called but few are chosen*. Predestination is implied in calling. To call is to support knowledge by faith, and to prick him whom he makes hear, and that belongs solely to the chosen. *He glorified*. This is about the foreknown, and not the others, who, although they believe for the time being and seem to be good, nevertheless because they do not persevere, they are not glorified. *He glorified* or *he will glorify*. This, indeed, is the future, but the past is referred to because God is said to have made from eternity those whom he has chosen to make. To such people, everything turns out for good, even though they may stray, so that they may be more careful and not trust in themselves. There are four things to be remembered; predestination, calling, justification, glorification. One is in God's hands, and three in ours. Our predestination is not

in ours, but in secret with him in his foreknowledge. The remaining three are in our hands.) (PL 114, 498)

A distinction is drawn here between the called and the chosen, whereas Romans only says that the predestined are called. This distinction will frighten Will in B xi 111-8. Another text, Romans 11: 7,[8] appears in the *Gloss* with a predestinarian interpretation, as does I Corinthians 4: 7,[9] though it is not given a predestinarian interpretation. Others, however, such as Romans 9: 13,[10] Ephesians 1: 5,[11] John 6: 39[12] and 15: 5[13] and 16,[14] and 2 Timothy 2: 19a,[15] are absent from the *Gloss,* which suggests that even its compilers were distancing themselves from Augustinianism. Although it is possible that a glossed text of Romans may not have been available to him, a more likely explanation for Langland's ignoring of Romans 8: 29-30 is that he deliberately rejects the doctrine of those verses. But he does quote the other verse referred to in this passage, Matthew 22: 14 ("multi autem sunt vocati pauci vero electi"[16]), which will be

[8] Electio autem consecuta est; caeteri vero excaecati sunt. (The elect indeed obtained it; the rest were blinded.)
[9] Quid autem habes, quod non accepisti? (What do you have which you did not receive?)
[10] Jacob dilexi, Esau autem odio habui. (I loved Jacob, but hated Esau.)
[11] Qui praedestinavit nos in adoptionem filiorum per Jesum Christum in ipsum, secundum propositum voluntatis suae. (Who predestined us to the adoption of children through Jesus Christ in himself, according to the purpose of his will.)
[12] Haec est autem voluntas ejus, qui misit me, Patris: ut omne, quod dedit mihi, non perdam ex eo, sed resuscitem illum in novissime die. (This is the will of him who sent me, the Father, that all that he gave me, I should not lose, but raise him up at the last day.)
[13] Ego sum vitis, vos palmites; qui manet in me, et ego in eo, hic fert multum fructum; quia sine me, nihil potestis facere. (I am the vine, you are the branches; he who lives in me, and I in him, he shall bear much fruit; since without me, you can do nothing.)
[14] Non vos me elegistis, sed ego elegi vos, et posui vos ut eatis et fructum affertis. (You did not choose me but I chose you and placed you that you should go and bear fruit.)
[15] Cognovit Dominus qui sunt ejus. (The Lord knows those who are his.)
[16] Many are called, but few are chosen.

discussed later. Other texts likewise will be dealt with in the course of examining the passages in which they are quoted.

St Augustine's influence underwent a revival in the fourteenth century, with Thomas Bradwardine (d. 1349),[17] Gregory of Rimini (d. 1358),[18] and most famously, John Wycliffe (d. 1384),[19] although there are points of difference between all of them and Augustine. Nevertheless, like Augustine, they tried to reassert and safeguard the primacy of God's election. Some of this Augustinian revival, certainly in Bradwardine's case, was a reaction to a new theological tendency, that of the *Moderni*. Two prominent members of the new school were William of Ockham and Robert Holcot (d. 1349). Bradwardine wrote his *De Causa Dei* in explicit opposition to Ockham and his followers, as Gordon Leff has shown.[20] This is not to suggest a continuity of Pelagianism or Semi-Pelagianism in Britain between the fifth and the fourteenth centuries. But perhaps Augustine may have seemed to some at the periphery a symbol of a metropolitan culture, whether centred on Rome or Avignon. Bradwardine is known to have spent some time at Avignon, and Ockham's writings were condemned there.

Bradwardine's doctrine of predestination is more extreme than Augustine's, in that he claims for God, not just the power to predestine people to eternal life, but also

[17] *De Causa Dei.*
[18] *Lectura in Primum et Secundum Librum Sententiarum.*
[19] *De Ecclesia.*
[20] *Bradwardine and the Pelagians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

to determine their every secular action, with the result that, as Leff points out, the whole sacramental system is undermined.[21]

Perhaps following Bradwardine, there still exists a tendency to lump Ockhamism and Semi-Pelagianism together. They are in fact distinct entities. Although Bradwardine accused the *Moderni* of Pelagianism, Ockham in fact wrote a repudiation of it. Ockham's thinking falls from paradox into incoherence. Obsessed above all with the absolute freedom of God, he posits that some are saved by their merits, others by a special grace:

> Ita est de quibusdam predestinatis predestinantur qui previdentur finaliter perseverare in charitate et quod deus non conferet eis vitam eternam nisi prius mererentur vitam eternam….Secundorum non videtur esse ratio quare predestinantur, nisi quia deus ita vult. (This is how it is with certain of the predestined, they are predestined because it is foreseen that they will finally persevere in charity and because God would not confer eternal life on them, unless they had first merited eternal life…With the others, there does not seem to be a reason why they are predestined, unless because God so wills it.)[22]

Behind this is the distinction between the *potentia Dei ordinata* and the *potentia Dei absoluta.* The former refers to the workings of God in the world mediated through

[21] 1957, p. 158.
[22] *Sentences*, Book I, dist. 41, qu 1B, quoted by Gordon Leff, 1957, p. 207. Translation mine.

scriptures, sacraments and commandments, and implies God's self-limitation in his relationship with human beings. The corollary of this is that God is knowable and predictable, although, as Stephen F. Brown, quoting Alexander of Hales and Peter of Trabes, has shown, there is an element of preordination, as the name *ordinata* implies.[23] *Potentia Dei absoluta* is characterised above all by the limitlessness of God, and its corollary is a God who is arbitrary and unknowable. This is Ockham's preferred doctrine; it implies God's complete freedom, including the inscrutable and arbitrary freedom to predestine to eternal life whomever he chooses. Ockham tries to evade the logical conclusion of this, namely God's untrammelled power. His version of freedom is purely negative and neutral, "free-wheeling", as David Aers describes it, because he makes the reconciliation of the world an act of divine freedom, not love.[24] Accepting no restrictions on God's freedom or power, Ockhamism implies that his government of the world need not be moral at all. Leff points to "a lack of order between deeds and rewards", enabling God to punish the good and reward the wicked.[25] As with extreme Augustinianism, this opens up the danger of antinomianism, if God, of his own free will, were to pardon even the most egregious sinner, and if his election bears no relation to the kind of life that individuals have lived. If there is no correlation between God's reward and human good works, if God can in theory admit an impenitent sinner to Heaven and refuse admission to a just person, then a powerful incentive to "lele lyvynge" is removed. Though arrived at by a

[23] 'Abelard and the Medieval Origins of the Distinction between God's Absolute and Ordained Power' in *Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and their Medieval Readers,* ed. Mark D. Jordan and Kent Emery, jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 206 and 208.
[24] *Salvation and Sin: Langland, Augustine and Fourteenth-Century Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), p. 41.
[25] 1957, p. 244.

different route, the Ockhamist belief in the absolute freedom of God's will is not so very different from Bradwardine's.

The debate continued after the deaths of Bradwardine and Ockham; in 1368, in condemning the heresies of Uhtred of Boldon, Archbishop Langham declared other Ockhamist doctrines such as the salvation of the heathen and salvation *ex puris naturalibus,* of which more in chapter six, to be heretical. While Langland is obviously a believer in the moral government of the universe, the controversy provides some of the theological background to *Piers Plowman*.

Wycliffe too risked the drawing of antinomian conclusions from his predestinarian doctrine; taking it to an illogical conclusion, he argues that mortal sin does not imperil the salvation of the elect:

> Quo ad secundum dicitur, cum nemo dubitat, quin multi predestinati peccarunt mortaliter… et predestinatio non potest perdi iuxta dicat, manifestum est quod gratia predestinationis stat cum mortali peccato. (As to which, on the second point, it is said, as no-one doubts, that many predestined have sinned mortally… and predestination cannot be lost, in accordance with what he says, it is obvious that the grace of predestination is consistent with mortal sin.)[26]

[26] *De Ecclesia*, 139, quoted by Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Orthodoxy to Dissent c. 1250 – c. 1450* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 218. Translation mine.

Unlike Augustine, Wycliffe separates predestination from grace; he appears to have no concept of grace working in the souls of the elect to produce good works.

At a less cerebral level, predestination is part of the theology of the fourteenth-century spiritual writer, Walter Hilton (d. 1396), himself an Augustinian canon, whose *Scale of Perfection* is roughly contemporaneous with *Piers Plowman*. To a large extent, Hilton follows his master. The reprobate ones have been justly forsaken by God, so he does them no wrong:

> Also of the reproved, hou rightfully He forsaketh hem and leveth hem in here synne and doth hem noo wronge; hou He rewardeth hem in this world, suffrynge hem for to have fulfillynge of here wille, and aftir this for to ponysch hem endelesli.[27]

He speaks of God having placed a limit on the number of those whom he has chosen:

> oure Lord Jhesu of His merci hath ordayned a certayn nombre of soulis to savacion, the which nombre was not fulfilled in tyme of His passioun, and therefore hit nedide that the lengthe of tyme thorugh kyndeli generacion of men

[27] *The Scale of Perfection,* ed. by Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University Press, 2000), p. 257.

it schulde be fulfilled.[28]

Like Augustine, but unlike Wycliffe, Hilton is not only concerned with eternal salvation, but with the sanctifying effects of God's gracious call on the soul in its earthly life. Final salvation is inseparable from the radical transformation of the soul, which he calls "reformynge in feeling". But elsewhere, he parts company with Augustine in two respects. Firstly, he modifies the strictness of Augustine's doctrine of election. The passion of Christ restores freedom of will, not only to the few who are predestined, but apparently the whole human race. Its result is "that he schulde be sette ageyn in the same free cheesynge that he was first inne, wethir he wolde have the profite of his reformynge or noo".[29] So Hilton does not accept that only a few will be saved while the multitude is damned:

> Nai, it is not likli for to trowe that for those soulis that aren oonli devoute and bi grace comen to goostli feelynge, and for no mo, oure Lord Jhesu schulde have taken mankynde and suffrid hard passioun of deeth. It had bee but a litel purchace to Hym for to have come fro so feer to so neer, and fro so high to so lowgh, for so few soulis.[30]

Secondly, Hilton sees human desire for salvation as essential, without apparent concern as to where the desire originates. He sees Jesus as a porter at the gate, "redi to

[28] ibid. p. 141.
[29] Ibid. p. 142.
[30] ibid. p. 150.

receive ilke a soule that wole be reformed in this liyfe to His liknesse".[31] While admitting that: "He is free and giveth Himsilf where he wole and whanne he wole… for though a soule werke al that he can and mai al his liyftyme, perfighte love of Jhesu shal he nevere have, til oure Lord Jhesu wole freeli given it,"

he qualifies it by adding:

> oon that other side, y seie also, that I hope that He geveth it not, but yif a man wirke and traveile al that he may and can, and yhe til hym thenketh that he mai no more or ellis be in ful wille therto yif that he myghte. And also it semeth that neither grace oonli withouten ful wirkynge of a soule that in it is, ne wirkynge alone withouten grace, bryngeth not a soule to reformynge in feeling, the which reformynge stondeth in perfite love and charité.[32]

As we shall see, Hilton is not alone in modifying Augustinianism in order to accommodate and motivate spiritual progress, and taking Bradwardine and Wycliffe also into account, it would seem that fourteenth-century Augustinianism was more revisionist than is sometimes thought.

Predestination is also an issue in other fourteenth-century literary texts. In *Patience*, we see not so much predestination for all eternity, as the earthly

[31] Ibid. p. 137.
[32] Ibid. p. 173.

inescapability of God's will, which therefore is to be accepted patiently. However, preaching repentance to all the inhabitants of Nineveh and the entire city's acceptance of the message does not fit with the doctrine of "many are called, but few are chosen".

Similarly, predestination in *Troilus and Criseyde* is this-worldly, not eternal, for example: "For al that comth, comth by necessite/ Thus to ben lorn, it is my destinee."[33] This should not be taken as an expression of Chaucer's own belief; rather, it demonstrates Troilus's intellectualizing of his pain and shows how he uses belief in "necessite" to justify his passivity and inaction. These texts seem to owe less to Augustine than to Bradwardine who introduced a this-worldly determinism into contemporary philosophy, although it is Boethius who is explicitly appealed to as an authority.

The most recent study of Augustine in relation to the theology and literature of fourteenth-century England is that of David Aers, already referred to, who presents an Augustinian critique of Bradwardine and Ockham among the theologians, and Julian of Norwich among the spiritual writers.[34] Aers gives Langland alone a positive assessment from an Augustinian perspective, because of his emphasis on human dependence on divine grace. While this is a very meticulous study, it has three defects. One is that he refracts Augustinian teaching on predestination through the softening

[33] *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* ed. by F. N. Robinson, 2nd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), IV 958-9, p. 491.
[34] *Salvation and Sin: Langland, Augustine and Fourteenth-Century Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009).

lens of St Thomas Aquinas, whose influence had been eclipsed before Langland's time, as Dom David Knowles has shown.[35] It is therefore unwise to look for specifically Thomist theology in *Piers Plowman*; while Augustine is quoted and referred to in the poem, Aquinas is not. Secondly, from the entire Augustinian corpus, Aers quotes mostly from the *Confessions*, *The City of God*, and the sermons, rather than the theological tracts. The former are aimed at a mixed clerical and lay audience, and therefore have a less polemical and more apologetic tone than the latter. Thirdly, for material for his argument, Aers focuses mostly on the Samaritan episode in C xix 46-93, ignoring the rather different emphases of the B-text, and indeed other parts of the C-text.

Emily Steiner, in studying the relationship between late medieval writing and the increasing prevalence of legal documents and modes of thought, devotes a chapter to *Piers Plowman*, particularly relating the pardon in B vii to Augustine's exposition of the *chirografum* of Colossians 2: 14 ("delens quod adversum nos erat chirografum decretis quod erat contrarium nobis, et ipsum tulit de medio, adfigens illud cruci"[36]), reinterpreted as God's bond committing himself to human salvation.[37] But as I shall show in more detail below, she is over-zealous to claim Langland as an Augustinian and the connections she notices do not bear the weight she places upon them. But apart from these two books, predestination and free will in *Piers Plowman* are not topics

[35] *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (London: Longmans, 1962), pp. 328-331.
[36] Deleting the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to our interests, and he has taken it away, fixing it to the cross.
[37] *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 93-142.

which have received much scholarly attention, which in this general field has mostly been devoted to questions of salvation and grace.

To turn now to *Piers Plowman*, the debate about predestination and free will does not explicitly surface until B viii. But the preaching of Repentaunce in B v implicitly raises the issue, since his audience is primarily the allegorised Seven Deadly Sins. Allegory may be described as the literary version of predestination; an allegorical character is inherently flat and two-dimensional, an automaton, controlled by the rigidity of his name and unable even to conceive of change, let alone wish it. This is not, however, true in *Piers Plowman*, even with characters such as Pacience, whose haste belies and undermines the determination of his character by his name, as his words come tumbling out from Latin to English and back again. The same can also be said of Ymaginatif whose enthusiasm for "clergie" sits alongside his imaginative ability to draw comparisons. The same is most true of the Sins who form the salient part of the crowd that hears the preaching of Repentaunce and decides to go on pilgrimage to the shrine of St Truth. This defamiliarisation and our resulting suspension of disbelief reveals that, in spite of their names and their past behaviours, they are not predestined to stay that way, even though their intention to repent is subject to a "cycle of relapses", in Aers' phrase.[38] The sins also seem to be facets of Will's own character, for it is he who first responds to Repentaunce's preaching: "Thanne ran Repentaunce and reherced his teme/ And garte Wille to wepe water with hise eighen" (B v 60-1).

[38] 2009, p. 105.

Then follow the confessions of the Seven Deadly Sins. Two passages call for particular comment. Firstly, at the end of Wrathe's confession, Repentaunce exclaims to Will: "'*Esto sobrius!*'[39] he seide, and assoiled me after/ And hade me wilne to wepe my wikkednesse to amende" (184-5). This reveals an unstable relationship between Will, a third-person character observed by an omniscient narrator in line 61, and a first-person narrator in lines 184-5. The confusion suggests the narrator's complicity in the sins of society. The C-text retains Will as the object of Repentaunce's preaching (C vi 1-2), but substitutes Wrath as the beneficiary of Repentaunce's absolution in vi 168-9.

Secondly, in Repentaunce's words to the recalcitrant Coveitise, we see the first appearance of the image of the book of life:

> "Thow art an unkynde creature – I kan thee noght assoille
> Til thow make restitucion," quod Repentaunce, "and rekene with hem alle.
> And sithen that Reson rolle it in the Registre of hevene
> That thow hast maad ech man good, I may thee noght assoille" (268-71).

Enrolment in the register is thus dependent on making restitution and the restoration of right relationships. Far from having been finalised from all eternity, it is constantly being updated.

[39] Be sober.

It is also worth noting that the process and outcome of Passus v reflect Langland's belief in the necessity and value of preaching. If he had not believed Will capable of repentance and learning to live a life of love, he would have had no motive for writing the poem. Particular significance attaches at this point to the figure of Sloth. Sloth is one of Will's besetting sins, and the paralysis of will that it entails is liable to precondition the slothful person to believe in predestination, as a self-justification. Will's liberation from predestination is at the same time liberation from sloth, as we shall see.

The overcoming of an inherent determinism implied in a name is also found in Piers himself. Initially, in B v –vii, "plowman" is both Piers' surname and job-title, but, following the tearing of the Pardon, he abandons ploughing: "Of preires and of penaunce my plough shal ben herafter" (B vii 120). As we saw in the previous chapter, he becomes a spiritual teacher (B xiii, xvi), then a "plowman" again, but in an allegorical sense (B xix), and finally an apocalyptic reformer and righter of wrongs (B xx). Any determinism implied in his name has been transcended.

The issue of Will's complicity in the sins of society is raised in Passus vi, though very obliquely, in Piers' appeal to the people to join him in farming the half-acre. Excluded are social outcasts such as Jakke the Jogelour and Jonette "of the Stuwes", another group of people defined, though not quite determined, by their names. Piers says:

Truthe tolde me ones and bade me telle it forth[er]:

Deleantur de libro vivencium[40] – I sholde not dele with hem,

For Holy Chirche is hote, of hem no tithe to aske,

Quia cum iustis non scribantur.[41]

Thei ben ascaped good aventure – now God hem amende! (B vi 74-7).

Emily Steiner[42] argues that Piers' excluding and surprisingly institutional words are based on St Augustine's exposition of Psalm 68: 29 in the *Enarrationes*, part of which is excerpted in the *Gloss:*

> Fratres, non sic accipere debemus, quoniam quemquam Deus scribat in libro vitae, et deleat illum. Si homo dixit, *Quod scripsi, scripsi,* de titulo ubi scriptum erat, *Rex Judaeorum*; Deus quemquam scribit et delet? Praecisus est; praedestinavit omnes ante constitutionem mundi regnaturos cum Filio suo in vita aeterna (Rom. 8: 29). Hos conscripsit; ipsos continet liber vitae. Denique in Apocalypsi quid ait Spiritus Dei, cum de pressuris ab Antichristo futuris loqueretur eadem scripturam?[43] *Consentient illi,* ait*, omnes qui non sunt scripti in libro vitae* (Apoc. 13: 8). Et ipsis constet non illos ibi esse. Proinde sine dubitatione non erunt consensuri qui scripti sunt. Isti ergo quomodo inde delentur, ubi nunquam scripti sunt? Hoc dictum est secundum spem ipsorum,

[40] Let them be deleted from the book of the living.
[41] Let them not be written alongside the righteous.
[42] 2003, pp. 138-9.
[43] Emendation mine.

[44]quia scriptos se putant. Quid est *deleantur de libro vitae*? Et ipsis non constet non illos ibi esse. Ex hac locutione dictum est in alio psalmo, *Cadent a latere tuo mille, et dena millia a dextris tuis* (Ps. 90: 7); id est, scandalizabuntur, et ex eo numero qui se sperabant sessuros tecum et ex eo numero staturos ad dexteram[45] tuam, separati ab haedis sinistris. (Brothers, we ought not thus to accept that God may inscribe someone in the book of life and delete him. If a man said, *What I have written, I have written*, concerning the caption where it was written, *The King of the Jews*, should God inscribe and delete someone? It is denied; he has predestined all of them from the foundation of the world to reign with his Son in eternal life. He has inscribed them; the book of life contains them. Finally, in the Apocalypse, what does the Spirit of God say, when he utters the same scripture concerning the future pressure from the Antichrist? *They worship it,* he says*, all who are not written in the book of life.* And it should be clear to them that they are not in it. So then without doubt those who are inscribed will not worship. How will they therefore be deleted from there, where they were never inscribed? In accordance with their hope, it is said, because they think themselves to have been inscribed. Why is it *Let them be deleted*? Because they think themselves to have been inscribed. It should be clear to them that they are not in it. In accordance with this manner of speaking, it is said in another psalm: *A thousand shall fall from your side, and ten thousand from your right hand*: that is, many will stumble, both from that number who hope they will sit with you,

[44] The text from this point is included in the *Gloss*.
[45] The text from the *Gloss* ends here.

and from that number who hope they will stand at your right hand, separated from the goats on the left.) (PL 36, 862-3)

It seems strange that the extract from the *Gloss* should end before that final allusion to the supremely ethical parable of the Sheep and the Goats. The *Gloss* adds a passage from Cassiodorus on similar lines:

> *De libro viventium.* Notitia Dei quae praedestinavit ad[46] vitam, quos praescivit conformes fieri imagini Filii sui. Non sic tamen accipiendum est, tanquam in hoc libro aliquem scribat Deus, quem postea deleat: sed secundum spem illorum, qui scriptos se putant. (*From the book of the living*. The register of God of those he has predestined to eternal life, whom he foreknew to be conformed to the image of his son. It is not, however, to be accepted that God would inscribe anyone in this book whom he would afterwards delete: except in accordance with the hope of those who think themselves to be written.) (PL 113, 950)

There are two problems with Steiner's Augustinian reading of Piers' words. One is that Piers' horizons at this stage are this-worldly. His citation of the verse, unlike Augustine's gloss on it, refers only to the secular situation of those to be deleted. Layman though he is, he is only interested in church discipline. So, in spite of the citation of the psalm verse, it is hard to identify those whom the psalmist calls for to be

[46] Emendation mine, supported by *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria.* Facsimile reprint of *editio princeps* by Adolphus Rusch of Strasbourg, edited with introduction by Karlfried Froelich and Margaret T. Gibson. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992).

deleted from the book of the living with the social outcasts listed by Piers; after all, the latter never deluded themselves with the hope that they were inscribed in it. The social outcasts may seem to be reprobates, not to have been predestined to eternal life, judging from their current life-style. But Piers – already Latinate and pastoral - then gives them the opportunity to repent. Furthermore, the moralism of B vi 74-7 is not Piers' last word on the fate of those on the margins of society, for he will shortly call "wastours" his brethren redeemed by God (207), and later, according to the "lewed vicory", "wastours and a wenche of the stewes" are included among those for whom he toils in B xix 439.

A second problem stems from Steiner's attempt to link the Pardon and the *chirographum Dei* of Colossians 2: 14 with Augustine's exegesis of Psalm 144, from which Langland quotes verse 9 ("misericordia ejus super omnia opera ejus"[47]) three times (B v 282a, xi 139a and xvii 314a). This is extremely tenuous, for three reasons: firstly, she claims to examine Psalm 144: 9 in the context of the rest of the psalm, although in practice she looks only at verse 20 ("custodit Dominus omnes diligentes se, et universos impios conteret"[48]) whose wording bears only a very slight relationship to that of the Pardon; secondly, quoting biblical verses out of context was the universal practice until the modern era; and thirdly, the verse implies universal salvation, completely opposite to Augustine's predestinarianism. The passages in the poem where it is quoted are meant to encourage the hearer, especially, as we shall see,

[47] His mercy is over all his works.
[48] The Lord guards all those who love him, and will destroy all the rebellious.

B xi 139a when Scripture is soothing Will after his "tene" stirred up by her sermon on Matthew 22: 14.

The phrase "the book of life" also occurs elsewhere in both Old and New Testaments, and in the *Gloss* is sometimes associated with predestination, for example on Philippians 4: 3:

> *Libro vitae.* Praedestinatio in qua omnes salvandi praedestinati sunt. Quasi: nolite, o Philippenses, graviter ferre quod omnes vos in epistola mea sigillatim non nominavi, quia etsi in ea non estis scripti, in libro tamen vitae continemini. (*In the book of life.* Predestination, in which all who are to be saved have been predestined. As if to say: O Philippians, do not take it seriously because I have not named you individually in my letter, because, although you are not written in it, you are contained in the book of life.) (PL 114, 607);

and with God's foreknowledge and the hardening of heart of the reprobate in Revelation 3: 5:

> *Non delebo.* Delet reprobos secundum illud: *Induravit Deus cor Pharaonis. De libro vitae.* Liber vitae praescientia Dei est in qua omnia continentur. (*I will not delete.* He deletes the reprobate along these lines: *God hardened Pharoah's heart. From the book of life.* The book of life is the foreknowledge of God in which everything is contained.) (PL 114, 715)

Similarly, on Revelation 20: 12 ("Et libri aperti sunt; et alius liber est qui est Vitae, et judicati sunt mortui ex his, quae scripta erant in libris, secundum opera ipsorum"[49]), the *Gloss* connects the *liber vitae* with predestination, with an echo of Augustine on Psalm 68:

> *Et libri aperti sunt.* Vel, liber est praescientia Dei quia tunc aperte mali se non sunt praedestinatos ad vitam quam in mundo existentes sibi promittebant. (*And the books were opened.* Or the book is the foreknowledge of God, because then sinners will clearly know that they are not predestined to life which those living in the world promised themselves.) (PL 114, 745)

But the image can also be associated with justification by works, according to which human salvation, far from being predestined, remains an open question till the day of judgement. So the *Gloss* on Revelation 3: 5 continues: "*Confitebur nomen ejus* dicens, *Venite benedicti Patris mei*. Vel hic, *dedistis mihi manducare et bibere*." (I will confess your name, saying, *Come, you blessed of my Father.* Or this, *you gave me food and drink.*) Salvation is here clearly a reward for works of mercy, specifically acting out the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. The *Gloss* on Revelation 20: 12 also sees the book of life as the instrument of condemnation for those who ignore the claims of God: "Libri, id est, divina praecepta quae quo dimiserunt, scient se pro merito puniri…" (The books, namely the divine commandments. Those who renounce

[49] And the books were opened; and another book is the book of Life, and the dead will be judged out of these which were written in the books, according to their works.

them will know that they will be punished for their deserts…) So people are judged in accordance with what they have done.

To return to the narrative of the poem, far from being Augustinian, Piers has only shown signs of Pelagianism at this stage. At the end of his earlier discourse, he assumes that the pilgrims can get to Truth by following his instructions. Only at the very end (B v 595) does he mention grace, but as the end of the pilgrimage, not its beginning. But habits of sin are too ingrained in the pilgrims; Sloth for example falls asleep before he can do penance (B v 386-92). Piers has overlooked their need for the church as the means of grace.

The debate over predestination and free will begins in earnest after the tearing of the Pardon. One of the two friars Will meets in B viii tells him that God has endowed everyone with free will:

> For he yaf thee to yeresyyve to yeme wel thiselve -
> And that is wit and free will, to every wight a porcion,
> To fleynge foweles, to fisshes and to beestes;
> Ac man hath moost therof, and moost is to blame
> But if he werche wel therwith, as Dowel hym techeth (52-6).

But given Langland's particular animus against the Franciscans, it is questionable whether we are to take this seriously. The friars do not think that the tendency, even

of the righteous, to sin seven times a day (viii 21-2) might imply that in reality the human will is not all that free; the frequency with which sins are committed makes one question the extent of the "wit and free will" that humans have been given and can work with. This seems to confirm the verdict of N. P. Williams who describes the characteristic Franciscan doctrine of man as "all but Semi-Pelagian", because of the belief that the human will is only weakened by sin.[50] One friar responds to Will's criticism of the universality of sin amongst them by regaling him with the exemplum of a man in a boat in a stormy sea who has to grasp the helm himself to bring it under control. The power of sin, in his view, seems to be restricted to the body only, not the soul. While admitting the sins of the virtuous (lines 45-50), and being sure of their safety, the friar takes deliberate sin, which he calls drowning, more seriously. But somehow their belief in the intactness of free will seems complacent and glib.

After Will has asked himself and others about Dowel, Dobet and Dobest and received inconsistent and digressive answers, he adopts Baptism as the safeguard of salvation; he thinks it is by itself sufficient, irrespective of one's subsequent way of life: "*Contra*!" quod I, "by Crist! That kan I repreve,/ And preven it by Peter and by Poul bothe:/ That is baptised beth saaf, be he riche or povere" (B x 343-5). But Scripture, with whom Will is debating here, will not accept such a mechanical understanding of the sacrament; it is necessary that the soul "sholde lovye and lene and the lawe fulfille" (354), a Semi-Pelagian, if not actually Pelagian stance.

[50] *The Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 399.

Next, Will clutches at clutches at predestination, though no-one he has spoken to has actually mentioned it. It is as if Piers' call for sinners on the margins of society to be deleted from the book of the living in B vi now makes Will question his own standing in the eyes of God:

> Manye tales ye tellen that Theologie lerneth,
> And that I man maad was, and my name yentred
> In the legende of lif longe er I were,
> Or elles unwritten for some wikkednesse, as Holy Writ witnesseth:
> *Nemo ascendit ad celum nisi qui de celo descendit*[51] (373-6a).

Will appears to use the verse from John 3: 13 as a proof-text in support of predestination, but without authority; it does not appear in the *Gloss* with that interpretation, and is not used explicitly as such by Augustine. The fact that it is not actually relevant in this context is perhaps an indication of Will's theological incompetence. Another indication is his failure to connect predestination with the work of grace in the soul in this life, a failure which he shares with Wycliffe.

In the C-text, Rechelessnesse, to whom Will's utterance is transferred, explicitly mentions predestination as part of the official teaching of the Church:

> For Clergie saith þat he seyh in þe seynt euangelie
> That y man ymaed was and my nam y-entred

[51] No-one ascends to heaven, except the one who came down from heaven.

In þe legende of lyf long er y were.

Predestinaet thei prechen, prechours þat this sheweth,

Or prescient inparfit, pult out of grace,

Unwritten for som wikkednesse, as Holy Writ sheweth (C xi 205-10a).

Unlike B vi 74-7 and x 373-6a, there is here an explicit link between predestination and the "legende of lyf", which here refers to eternal destiny. But like Will in B x 376, Rechelessnesse suggests that people can be deleted from the book of life, contradicting the *Gloss* on Psalm 68: 29. "Pult" in line 210 may be glossed as expelled or deleted; but far from accepting that people can be "unwritten" from the book of life for "som wikkednesse," the *Gloss* denies that the reprobate were ever in the book of life in the first place. Also "prescient", which literally means foreknown, has changed its meaning since Augustine to refer to the reprobate.

Clergie has not in fact said anything about the "legende of lyf"; the reference, as Pearsall points out,[52] is probably to the general teaching of the Church. So the laity would know about predestination and be exposed to its demotivating tendencies. The fact that the speaker is Rechelessnesse should in any case make the interpreter wary. Rechelessnesse is a personification of facets of Will's personality, namely his sloth and *insousciance.* Like Will, he is hostile to learning, and includes predestination along with the rest of academic theology. It is strange therefore that Janet Coleman

[52] 1994, p. 204.

describes him as a determinist.[53] What he does believe in is salvation by grace.

What Clergie has said is in defence of patristic learning, as exemplified by Augustine, the recipient of direct divine revelation:

> Austyn þe olde herof made bokes:
> Ho was his autor and hym of God tauhte?
> Patriarkes and prophetes, apostles and angelis –
> And þe trewe trinite to Austyn apperede
> And he us saide as he say and y bileue,
> That he seyh þe fader and þe son and þe seynt spirit togederes,
> And alle thre bote o god, and herof he made bokes,
> ȝe, busiliche bokes! Ho beth his witnesses? (C xi 148-56).

Pearsall suggests that the allusion is perhaps to a passage in the *Confessions* or *The Golden Legend*;[54] but for someone keen on learning, it is ironical that Clergie gives no chapter and verse for his claim. Possibly also Langland is looking askance at his conferring on Augustine an authority independent of "patriarkes and prophetes, apostles and angelis" and his hint that direct revelation includes predestination.

Rechelessnesse shows, furthermore, an Ockhamist sense of the inscrutability of

[53] *Piers Plowman and the Moderni* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia et Letteratura, 1981), p. 129.
[54] 1994, p. 200.

God's final determination of their eternal destiny:

By that þat Salamon saith hit semeth þat no wyht
Woet ho is worthy for wele or wykkede,
Wheþer he is worthy to wele or wykkede pyne.
Sunt iusti atque sapientes et opera eorum in manu dei sunt[55] (273-5a).

To return to B x, Will ends his diatribe against the dangers of learning by asserting that the task of the clergy is to save souls:

Right so lewed men and of litel kunnyng
Selden falle thei so foule and so fer in synne
As clerkes of Holy Kerke that kepen Cristes tresor –
The which is mannes soule to save, as God seith in the Gospel:
Ite vos in vineam meam[56] (B x 472-5a).

The application of the parable in the *Gloss* to evangelism was noted in chapter three. This is most unexpected; after dabbling in predestination, Will now insists on the necessity of evangelism, which rests on belief in the freedom of the human will and capacity to change. In response, Scripture gives him short shrift, reducing him to tears. So belief in predestination has been no help to him. It is no surprise, therefore, that, under the spell of his belief in the doctrine, he enters the Land of Longynge, is

[55] There are the just and there are the wise, and their works are in the hands of God.
[56] Go you into my vineyard.

beguiled by Fortune, predestination's secular equivalent, and takes up with *Concupiscentia Carnis* and Coveitise of Eighes (B xi 1-14, C xi 166-87). It is not that under the cloak of predestination, he deliberately chooses a life of cynical antinomianism; his fall into sin is the result of an enfeeblement of will which the doctrine has engendered in him. The irony is that, like his fictional contemporary Troilus, Will does not have to believe in predestination; no-one has predestined him to do so, and the situation he finds himself in is the result of his own ignorance, lack of discernment and feeling of intellectual inferiority. If one is not predestined, then despair is the danger; if one is, then the danger is self-indulgence.

When Scripture reappears after Will's escape from the Land of Longynge, she unexpectedly preaches on Augustine's predestinarian text, Matthew 22: 14: "*Multi* to a mangerie and to the mete were sompned;/ And whan the peple was plener comen, the porter vnpynned the yate/ And plukked in *Pauci* pryveliche and leet the remenaunt go rome" (B xi 112-4). The *Gloss* does not give this verse a predestinarian interpretation, but Augustine does in his *Expositio quorundum Propositiones ex Epistola ad Romanos*, in connection with Romans 8: 29-30:

> Sed alibi legimus, *Multi vocati, pauci autem electi* (Matt. 22: 14). Tamen quia ipsi quoque electi utique vocati sunt, manifestum est non justificatos nisi vocatos, quanquam non omnes vocatos, sed eos qui secundum propositum vocati sunt sicut superius dixit, Propositum autem Dei accipiendum est, non ipsorum. Ipse autem exponit quid sit secundum propositum, cum dicit, *Quoniam quos ante*

praescivit et praedestinavit conformes imagines Filii ejus. Non enim omnes qui vocati sunt, secundum propositum vocati sunt; hoc enim propositum ad praescientiam et praedestinationem Dei pertinet; nec praedestinavit aliquem, nisi quem praescivit crediturum et secutorum vocationem suam, quos et electos dicit. Multi enim non veniunt cum vocati fuerint; nemo autem venit, qui vocatus non fuerit. (But elsewhere, we read, *Many are called but few are chosen*. However, because those who are chosen are certainly called, it is obvious that they are not justified unless they are called, although not all are called, but those who are called in accordance with his purpose, as he said above. God's purpose is to be accepted, not theirs. He himself explains why it is according to the purpose when he says, *Since he has foreknown them and conformed them to the image of his Son.* Not all who are called, are called according to the purpose; for this purpose relates to the foreknowledge and predestination of God; but he has not predestined anyone unless he foreknew that he would believe and follow his calling, whom he calls chosen. So many do not come, though they were called; no-one comes who has not been called.) (PL 35, 2076-7)

Again, St Paul's order is reversed; not all the called have been predestined. Whatever the reason why Scripture makes no mention either of those in the parable who refuse the king's invitation or those who are compelled to come in (or whether Will simply ignores them), the result is to play down the freedom of choice of the invitees and make entry to the wedding feast simply a matter of election. But significantly, when Anima (B xv 461-84), expatiating on the need for mercy, refers to the symbolic

meanings of the food for the feast, where God "of his grace gyveth alle menne blisse" (481), he conveys no sense of divine election restricting access to the heavenly banquet. With regard to the reference to the porter in line 113, as we have seen, Hilton applies the porter-image to Jesus; in *Piers Plowman*, the porter is called Grace (B v 595) and Pees, the name of one of the daughters of God (B xx 331-350).

The effect is that Will is led, like Bunyan three centuries later, to agonise over his salvation: "Al for tene of hir text trembled myn herte/ And in a weer gan I wexe, and with myself to dispute/ Wheither I were chose or noghte chose" (B xi 115-7). He is reduced to both spiritual and ethical impotence. He cannot accept what Scripture has said and again takes refuge in his Baptism, asserting that because

> "Crist cleped us alle, come if we wolde -
> Sarsens and scismatikes, and so he dide the Jewes;
> ……
> Thanne may alle Cristene come," quod I, "and cleyme there entrée
> By the blood that he boughte us with and thorugh bapteme after:
> *Qui credidit et baptizatus fuerit…*" (119-20, 123-4a).

This is the polar opposite of Augustine's teaching that even some of the baptised have not been predestined to salvation. But rather than a sign of Langland's criticism of Augustinianism, this reliance on Baptism may also be attributed to Will's immaturity and irresponsibility. Scripture then withdraws from her Augustinian position, ending

by quoting the universal compassion of Psalm 144: 9 (see above).

Ymaginatif too upholds a generous understanding of Christian hope: "*Contra*!" quod Ymaginatif thoo, and comsed for to loure/ And seide "*Salvabitur vix iustus in die iudicii;/ Ergo – salvabitur!"*[57] (B xii 277-9). In the *Gloss* on this text from I Peter 4: 18, St Augustine comments:

> Quaeritis causam quare justus vix in Dei judicio salvus esse possit et quare? nisi quia Dei justitiam tantam esse certum est, ut interdum quae videntur in hominibus nostro judicio esse justa, judicio Dei inveniuntur injusta secundum illud, *Homo videt in facie, Deus autem intuetur cor.* (You ask why the just man can scarcely be saved at the judgement of God, and why? unless because it is certain that the justice of God is so great that sometimes those things in man which seem to be just in our judgement, by the judgement of God are found to be unjust, in line with the text, *Man sees by appearances, but God perceives the heart*.) (PL 114, 688)

So Langland here dissents from the *Gloss*, at one of the few points at which it quotes from Augustine in characteristically Augustinian mode. The challenge to Augustine's interpretation of *vix* is ultimately a challenge to his theological rigorism. While Augustine emphasises the difficulty of salvation, almost the divine grudgingness, Langland seizes exultantly on the hope of salvation. Even though it is "scarcely", it is

[57] The righteous man will scarcely be saved. Therefore he will be saved.

real all the same, and even Augustine cannot effectively argue with the clear sense of the word "just" in the New Testament. This exegesis is repeated in C xiv 202-4, but there is a slight backtracking in the next passus, where, as Derek Pearsall points out,[58] the Dreamer interprets *vix*, not as "scarcely", but as a symbol of the Five Wounds of Christ, in words that echo Augustine: "And y merueyled in herte how Ymaginatyf saide/ That *iustus* bifore Iesu *in die iudicii*/ Non *salvabitur* bote if *vix* helpe" (C xv 21-3).

If Langland rejects predestination, this must imply that he believes that people are to some degree free to work out their own salvation. Langland's teaching on charity and good works is predicated on his belief that human nature is not a *massa perditionis*, that humans have the freedom to choose the good and reject evil. He embodies this doctrine above all in the teaching and role of Anima and Liberum Arbitrium.

Liberum Arbitrium's exact status is unclear in the B-text. Two alternatives can be put forward. One is that he is an allegorisation of a human faculty. If so, then the will is created free in essence, continues free in spite of the Fall and therefore does not need to be set free by God. If, on the other hand, his swift appearance, coming straight after *Potencia-Dei-Patris* and *Sapiencia-Dei-Patris*, suggests he is a fourth hypostasis of God, this would make his use of "grace and help of the Holy Goost" (B xvi 50-2) incoherent. There is also the awkward question of how a hypostatis of God's own

[58] 1994, p. 247.

nature could be Piers' "lieutenaunt" (B xvi 16-7, 47), to whose care the Tree of Charity is entrusted.

While Piers uses the first two "pils", *Potencia-Dei-Patris* and *Sapiencia-Dei-Patris,* to save the fruit (B xvi 30-9), it is Liberum Arbitrium who, according to Piers, prevents the devil from stealing blossom from the tree: "Ac *Liberum Arbitrium* letteth hym some tyme/ That is lieutenaunt to loken it wel, bi leve of myselve" (46-7), and snatches the Holy Spirit to use as a stave against him: "Thanne *Liberum Arbitrium* lacceth the thridde planke/ And palleth doun the pouke pureliche thorugh grace/ And help of the Holy Goost – and thus I have the maistrie" (50-52).

However, the devil does succeed in picking up the fallen fruit, namely Adam, Abraham and other pre-Christian figures, and takes them *in Limbo inferni* (79-85). Though the initiative and active role of Liberum Arbitrium are clearly a rejection of Augustinian teaching, the fact that Piers is powerless to prevent the theft of the fallen fruit does seem Augustinian.

In the C-text, Liberum Arbitrium is also the recipient of divine trust; he is "Cristes creature" and known in "Cristes court" (xvi 166-7). In C xviii, he replaces Anima and Piers as the speaker. The passage suggests a belief in the human power to choose to obey the law of love. Instead of coming after them, it is Liberum Arbitrium who here calls *Potencia-dei-Patris* and *Sapiencia-dei-Patris* in aid (34, 40). But at the climactic moment of the Incarnation, it is not human Liberum Arbitrium who takes the

initiative, but much more theologically appropriately, *Libera-Voluntas-Dei*, the Second Person of the Trinity; even so, it is implied that human free will is capable of being transformed into God's free will. This is not Ockhamist indeterminacy, but the freedom of God to act to save the world.

However, this optimism is not sustained. Abraham's account of the parable of the Good Samaritan, where the man who fell among thieves is unable to help himself, marks a new emphasis on human weakness: "For he ne myghte steppe ne stande ne stere foot ne handes/ Ne helpe hymselfe soothly, for *semivif* he semed/ And as naked as a nedle, and noon help abouten" (B xvii 55-7). Aers takes this as a sign of a sense of human dependence on divine grace.[59] But dependence on grace is not the same as being predestined to eternal life. In fact, these lines are not about the weakness of the will so much as the lack of human strength, a vital distinction. Furthermore, the *semivif* is nowhere said to have been chosen; he is not an individual, a brand plucked from the burning as it were, but an archetypal figure representing all humanity which in principle is capable of receiving salvation. This is consistent with what happens during the Harrowing of Hell where the souls in Hell cannot extricate themselves, but need the victorious Christ to set them free. The immediately-preceding debate of the four daughters of God might be taken as a challenge to predestination, in that Truthe and Rightwisnesse are certain that the fate of those in hell is irrevocable, while Mercy and Pees have been appointed to be "mannes meynpernour for everemoore after"

[59] 2009, pp. 89-90.

(184). But they come round at the end of the passus to Mercy and Pees' way of thinking.

The final two passūs of the poem see a recrudescence of the power of evil, for free will seems to have atrophied once more, and as in the ploughing of the half-acre, high ideals and hopes fail. But if determinism is once more apparent, it is clear that it is something that humanity inflicts on itself by freely choosing evil. This is very apparent when the "comune" rejects Conscience's insistence on *redde quod debes*. Their first and only too articulate spokesman is the brewer:

> "Ye? Baw!" quod a brewere, "I wol noght be ruled,
> By Iesu! for al youre jangelynge, with *Spiritus Justicie*
> Ne after Conscience, by Crist! while I kan selle
> Bothe dregges and draf and drawe it at oon hole -
> Thikke ale or thynne ale; for that is my kynde
> And noght hakke after holynesse " (B xix 400-5).

Cheating and the rejection of conscience have become second nature to the brewer. Aers observes: "Such a conversion of *kynde* naturalises conflict, deceit and exploitative competition and the rejection of those forms of life that Christ's sacraments compose".[60] The same is true of the king's "kynde" (B xix 480).

[60] 2009, p. 113.

In the face of this deliberate choice of evil, a doctrine of election, with the number of the saved already fixed, emerges for the first time since Scripture's sermon in B xi. Conscience tells the friars:

> "Monkes and moniales and alle men of religion –
> Hir ordre and hir reule wole to han a certain noumbre;
> Of lewed and of lered the lawe wole and asketh
> A certein for a certein – save oonliche of freres!
> Forthi," quod Conscience, "by Crist kynde wit me telleth
> It is wikked to wage yow – ye wexen out of noumbre!
> Hevene hath evene noumbre, and helle is withoute noumbre;
> Forthi I wolde witterly that ye were in the registre
> And youre noumbre under notarie sygne, and neither mo ne lasse!" (B xx 264-72).

We recall here the numberless companions of Lucifer in the Fall of the Angels in B i 116, and Augustine's belief that the number of the saved is fixed by predestination. Perhaps "registre" is an echo of the "Registre of hevene" in B v 270 and the "legende of lif" in B x 375, as well as a document deriving from the order's Rule, and a particular house's endowment. This is, however, attributable to antifraternal hostility, rather than a commitment to predestination.

Langland may then be placed somewhere between Augustine, as interpreted by

his contemporaries, and Pelagius, between complete determinism and absolute free will. *Piers Plowman* contains some Augustinian elements, including passages, such as Will's encounter with the friars, which demonstrate a consciousness that the will is not utterly free. Conscience, too, accepts the predestinarian corollary, that the number of the saved is fixed; but this is in the context of antifraternal polemic. But mostly Langland seems closer to the Semi-Pelagians, in that he does not present the will as completely enfeebled and therefore incapable of taking the initiative in choosing to do God's will. The rescue of the *semivif* shows that it is not so much the will that is lacking, as the strength to save oneself. Another indicator of a Semi-Pelagian position is that Will tries predestination and finds it wanting. But in the light of the final two passūs, it is hard to pin the Semi-Pelagian label on Langland with total confidence; a more accurate description would be eclectic, though he is plainly aware of the unethical implications of both extreme currents in fourteenth-century theology. There is in fact no single doctrine of predestination and free will throughout any of the versions of *Piers Plowman,* but a constant dialectic between the two. The critic should always remember that the poem is not a theological treatise; its concern is to reflect the lived experience of the late fourteenth century. Belief in predestination and belief in free will both bear witness to significant facets of Christian experience; but for practical purposes, people orientate themselves towards free will.

Given the centrality of ethics in the poem, which was established in the previous chapter, one may now tentatively suggest that Langland's hermeneutic principle in assessing Christian doctrines and in the choice of Biblical and patristic quotations is

that of ethical productivity; whether or not a doctrine is conducive to ethical behaviour in its adherents. That is the criterion by which he navigates his course through the different emphases and interpretations of the teaching he has received. The doctrine of predestination fails this test. There is a parallel between the use of an unintelligible language resulting in practical antinomianism, as we saw in chapter two, and the choice of a theology remote from everyday assumptions. Belief in free will is essential, not only for a convincing poetic narrative, but also for ethical behaviour.

The *Gloss*, as we have seen, excerpts few passages with a predestinarian interpretation. Of the three directly referred to in *Piers Plowman*, Psalm 68: 29 is undermined as a proof-text by its context in the poem, by Piers' subsequent practice and by the *Gloss*'s own apparent neutrality on the other verses containing the image of the book of life; Matthew 22: 14, though not given a predestinarian interpretation in the *Gloss*, is likewise implicitly critiqued by its demoralising effect on Will; and Augustine's interpretation of I Peter 4: 18 is roundly contradicted by Ymaginatif. It will be evident that those verses which have been reviewed in this chapter are devoid of ethical content. In criticising the doctrine of predestination's lack of ethical productivity, and upholding human free will, especially concerning the important topics of ethical behaviour and preaching, Langland at least is not contradicted by the *Gloss*'s lack of enthusiasm for predestination.

FIVE

ORIGINAL SIN

Compared with the amount of attention devoted to Langland's theology of predestination and grace, surprisingly little work seems to have been done on his theology of original sin, and even less on his portrayal of Adam. There appear to be no full- or article-length studies.[1] Before examining *Piers Plowman* itself, the same format will be followed as in the previous chapter; firstly, a review of Augustine's theology of original sin; then an examination of relevant passages from the *Gloss*; and then how original sin is treated in fourteenth-century English theology and spirituality.

St Augustine's teaching is that all the evils in the world, including people's actual sins, derive entirely from the original sin of Adam, the eating of the forbidden fruit at the instigation of his wife Eve, as told in Genesis 3. Original sin is not the same as actual sin; the former is an inescapable part of the human condition, since every person who lives inherits both the guilt for Adam's sin and his subsequent propensity for sin. The latter is the direct responsibility of each individual. God's forgiveness of human sin thus contains two facets, firstly forgiveness for original sin, extended to everyone in principle through the death of Christ; and secondly forgiveness of actual sins, only to be obtained through personal penitence.

[1]For the wider theological background, a good, though dated, survey can be found in N. P. Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926).

Augustine's doctrine of original sin, for our purposes, has four elements. The first is the belief that sin has such an unbreakable hold on human nature that people cannot avoid sinning. The result, according to a passage in the *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia,* is the utter vitiation of the human will:

> Unde illo magno primi hominis peccato, natura ibi nostra in deterius commutata, non solum facta est peccatrix, verum etiam generat peccatores; et tamen ipse languor quo bene vivendi virtus periit, non est utique natura, sed vitium: sicut certe mala in corpore valetudo non est ulla substantia vel natura sed vitium; et licet non semper tamen plerumque malae valetudines parentum ingenerantur quodammodo, et apparent in corporibus filiorum. (So by that great sin of the first man, our nature has been changed for the worse; it has not only become a sinner, truly it also conceives sinners; and whatever that weakness by which the power of living well has died, it is certainly not nature, but sin; as indeed certainly the evil weakness in the body is not a substance or nature but vice; and although not always, but generally, the bad dispositions of parents somehow take root and appear in the bodies of their children.) (PL 44, 471)

Preferring abstraction, Augustine attributes sin to human nature, rather than to actual people.

Secondly, if human nature has become a sinner and conceives sinners, a doctrine of seminal identity is implied between Adam and the rest of the human race, so that each

individual inherits the taint and effects of original sin from Adam:

> Omnes enim fuimus in illo uno, quando omnes fuimus ille unus, qui per feminam lapsus est in peccatum, quae de illo facta est ante peccatum. Nondum erat nobis singillatim creata et distributa forma, in qua singuli vivemus; sed jam natura erat seminalis, ex qua propagaremur; qua scilicet propter peccatum vitiata, et vincula mortis obstricta, justeque damnata, non alterius conditionis homo ex homine nasceretur. (We were all in that one man, when we were all that one man, who fell into sin through the woman, who was made from him before sin. Nor yet was our form, in which each of us lives, individually created and shared out; but already nature, by which we are increased, was now seminal; which, obviously ruined because of sin, and the fastened chains of death, and justly damned, man of another condition may not be born from man.) (PL 41, 386)

Since "we were all that one man", all humans are responsible for Adam's sin and incur the penalty for it. So human beings are locked into an inescapable position by physical descent from Adam. This is far more serious than merely imitating a bad example, which Augustine specifically rules out in his dialogue with the Pelagian Julian:

> Disputamus enim, non de quocumque peccatore, qui quandocumque peccavit in mundo; sed de illo per quem peccatum intravit in mundum: ubi si quaeratur exemplum imitationis, diabolus invenitur; si contagium generationis, Adam. Proinde, dicens Apostolus, *Per unum hominem peccatum intravit in mundum*,

> peccatum generationis intelligi voluit. Imitationis enim peccatum, non per unum hominem, sed per diabolum intravit in mundum. (We are not arguing about any sinner who has sinned at any time in the world, but about him through whom sin has entered the world; where, if an example for imitation is sought, the devil is found; if the contagion of begetting, Adam. Accordingly, when the Apostle says, *Through one man, sin entered the world,* he wishes the sin of begetting to be understood. For the sin of imitation did not enter the world through the one man, but through the devil.) (PL 45, 1163)

There is a close parallel between this and the *Gloss* on Romans 5: 12 ("propterea sicut per unum hominem in hunc mundum peccatum intraverit et per peccatum mors et ita in omnes homines mors pertransiit in quo omnes peccaverunt"[2]), although it is not attributed to Augustine:

> Sive ergo ab Eva, sive ab Adam dicitur, utrumque ad primum hominem pertinet; et per hoc Apostolus peccatum originale propagationis intelligi voluit cujus princeps Adam, non imitationis, cujus princeps diabolus; unde *Invidia diaboli mors intravit in hunc mundum.* (Whether therefore it is ascribed to Eve or Adam, both refer to the first man, and from this, the Apostle wished the original sin to be understood as a matter of propagation, whose prime mover is Adam; not of imitation, whose prime mover is the devil. So: *By the envy of the devil, death*

[2] Besides, just as through one man sin has entered this world, and through sin death, and so in all men, death spread, in whom all have sinned.

entered this world.) (PL 114, 485)

Augustine makes the sin of Adam the origin of sin, because imitating the devil might suggest the survival of free will; imputing sin to inheritance safeguards his insistence on the loss of free will. Thus human sinfulness is not the result of the present-day exercise of free will; and again, as with predestination, the danger of antinomianism appears, if people, believing they have no choice, then choose to commit sin.

Thirdly, as a result of the sin of Adam, the human race has become, in the Augustinian scheme of things, a *massa perditionis*, so steeped in sin as to be incapable of escaping from it and therefore worthy of eternal damnation. Three references to humanity as a *massa perditionis* can be found in the *Gloss*, the first two of which are excerpted from Augustine and the third from his mentor, St Ambrose. The first is on John 15: 18 ("Si mundus vos odit, scitote quia me priorem vobis odio habuit"[3]):

> Nomine mundi aliquando boni, aliquando mali designantur, quia una massa est quae tota in Adam periit, de qua sunt alia vasa in honorem, alia in contumeliam. (By the name of the world, sometimes good things, sometimes bad are indicated, because it is one mass which has perished entirely in Adam, out of which some vessels are chosen for honour, some for dishonour.) (PL 114, 411)

The second is on Romans 9: 21 ("An non habet potestatem figulus luti, ex eadem

[3] If the world hates you, know that it hated me first.

massa facere aliud quidem vas in honorem, aliud vero in contumeliam?"[4]):

> Sic tota massa humani generi juste corrupta, et lutosa est: si inde vas in honorem, misericordia est; si in contumeliam, justum est, quia hoc est natura. (So now that the mass of humankind has been justly destroyed, it is also filthy. If a vessel is made for honour out of that, it is out of pity; if for dishonour, it is righteous, because this is its nature.) (PL 114, 502)

The third is on I Corinthians 4: 7 ("Quis enim te discernit?"[5]):

> A massa perditorum? Nullus nisi Deus. (From the mass of the lost? No-one, except God.) (PL 114, 525)

These glosses highlight the acute arbitrariness and inscrutability of God's choice, but none encapsulates the sheer injustice of this condemnation as starkly as the Augustinian *Gloss* on Romans 9: 13 ("Jacob dilexi, Esau autem odio habui"[6]):

> In Jacob nihil invenit amandum, nisi misericordiae suae donum. In Esau, nihil odit, nisi peccatum originale. (In Jacob, he finds nothing worth loving, except the gift of his mercy. In Esau, he hates nothing, except original sin.) (PL 114, 501)

[4] Does the potter not have power over the clay, to make from the same mass, one vessel for honourable use, another for dishonourable?
[5] Who sees anything different in you?
[6] Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.

Yet Jacob too was presumably subject to original sin. God's choice again appears arbitrary and inscrutable.

Fourthly, the sin of Adam and Eve has two roots, one of which is covetousness for divine knowledge, the other pride and the desire for equality with God. Both are dealt with in a passage in the *Gloss* on Genesis 3: 3, the full text of which can be found in the *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*:

> Interrogata mulier respondit[7] quid eis praeceptum esset; ait ille, *Non morte moriemini; sciebat enim Deus quoniam qua die manducaveritis ex illo, aperientur oculi vestri, et eritis sicut dii, scientes bonum et malum.* Videmus his verbis per superbiam peccatum esse persuasum; ad hoc enim valet quod dictum est: *Eritis sicut dii.* Sicut etiam hoc quod dictum est*, Sciebat enim Deus quoniam qua die manducaveritis ex illo, aperientur oculi vestri* quid hic intelligitur, nisi persuasum esse, ut sub Deo esse nollent, sed in sua potestate potius sine Domino et legem ejus non observarent, quasi invidentes[8] sibi ne se ipse regerent non indigentes illius interno lumine, sed utentes propria providentia quasi oculis suis, ad dignoscendum bonum et malum, quod ille prohibuisset? Hoc est ergo quod persuasum est, ut suam potestatem nimis amarent, et cum Deo esse pares vellent, illa mediatate, per quam Dei subjecti erant, et corpora subjecta habebant, tanquam fructu arboris constitutae in medio paradisi, male uterentur, id est contra legem

[7] The text of the *Gloss* breaks off here.
[8] Emendation mine.

> Dei; atque ita quod acceperant, amitterent, dum id quod non acceperant, usupare voluerunt. (For when the woman was questioned and had replied what was commanded them, he {sc. the serpent} said, *You will surely not die! For God knows that on the day when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.* We see from these words that the persuasion to sin was by means of pride; this is the meaning of what is said, *You will be like gods*. Likewise also what is said, *God knows* ... What is meant by this, except that they were persuaded to refuse to be subject to God, but rather, to want to be their own power without the Lord? And to refuse to observe his law, as if envying him, they were to rule themselves, not lacking his inner light, but using their own providing, like their own eyes, for distinguishing good and evil, which he had forbidden? This therefore is because they were persuaded to love their own power too much and to desire to be equal with God. Contrary to the law of God, they misused their middle status, by which they were subject to God and held their bodies in subjection, just like the fruit of the tree placed in the midst of Paradise; and also, they thus lost what they had received, while wishing to usurp what they had not received.) (PL 34, 207-8)

So he attributes the sin of Adam and Eve, not to sexual concupiscence, but to pride and the desire to be God's equals in knowledge.

Two other common proof-texts for original sin are expounded in the *Gloss*. The first is Psalm 50: 7 ("ecce in iniquitate conceptus sum et in peccato peperit me mater

mea"[9]). Cassiodorus furnishes us with this extract, an example of complacency bordering on consent to antinomianism:

> Hic invidia peccati minuitur[10], quando proprium crimen delictis generalibus comparatur: ut ipsa multitudo et confessio peccatorum miserationem boni judicis commoveret. Ergo iste sensus est: Quid dicam me modo fecisse quae arguor, qui jam ex originali peccato iniquitatibus probor esse conceptus; ut ante peccata contraxerim quam vitae principia reperissem? … Neque enim est novum illum peccare qui *in iniquitatibus conceptus et in delictis est* genitus. Quid humilius, quid simplicius quam [11]de uno peccato redargui et simul omnia confiteri? (The odium of sin is diminished when personal wrongdoing is compared to sins in general, with the result that the sheer number and the confession of sins would stir up the compassion of the good judge. This is the point, therefore: why should I state that I myself have done only what I am accused of, I who stand proved to have been conceived in iniquity through original sin, so that I would have admitted that I had committed sin before the beginning of life… He who *is conceived in wickedness* and born *in sins* is not new to sin. What more humble, what more simple than to be accused of one sin and at the same time to confess all?) (PL 70, 362)

The *Gloss* on Psalm 7: 15-6, attributed to St Augustine, though only loosely based

[9] Behold, I was conceived in iniquity and my mother gave birth to me in sin.
[10] The text in the *Gloss* breaks off here.
[11] The text in the *Gloss* resumes here.

on the relevant *Enarratio*, softens the harshness of the passages examined above, laying the responsibility for sin on the human race in general:

> *Ecce*. Quasi haec paravit Deus in Scripturis. Unde videtur homini esse causa damnationis. Sed *ecce* quod non ex deo, sed ex homine est quia *lacum aperuit. Concepit dolorem*, id est, appetitu temporalium rerum. *Peperit.* Effecit, misit; etc in emissa iniquitate est lacus, id est, praecipitium aliis. Unde subdit: Vs 16 *Lacum aperuit*. Et sic est comparabilis aperienti lacum: aperit enim concipiendo fraudem: effodit parturiendo, instando operi fraudis; incidit pariendo fraudem, scilicet, perpetrando. (*Behold*. As if God has planned it in the Scriptures. So the cause of man's damnation is seen. But *behold,* it is not from God, but from man, because *he has opened up a pit*. *He conceived grief*, that is, by desire for worldly things. *He brought forth.* He produced, sent out etc; the pit is in the sin which has been committed, that is, a pitfall for others**.** So it says: (vs. 16) *He has opened up a pit*. And this is comparable to opening up the pit; he opens up fraud by conceiving it; he digs it out by giving birth to it, by pressing on with the work of crime; he falls into deceit, that is, by submitting to it.) (PL 113, 855; PL 36, 107)

This implies that sin engenders more sin; but surprisingly for Augustine, there is no harping on the first sin of Adam.

So the *Gloss* contains six excerpts from Augustine, one from Ambrose and one from Cassiodorus on original sin in its extreme form, which suggests a readiness on

the compilers' part to endorse this understanding of the doctrine, in spite of its inextricable relationship with predestination, of which, as the previous chapter has shown, they were wary. This might suggest that they do not see Augustine's understanding of original sin as vulnerable to the same ethical criticism as predestination; so in their eyes, acceptance of it does not undermine personal responsibility for actual sins, regardless of their number or gravity.

Apart from these, the *Gloss* on the story of the Fall is largely silent on the Augustinian understanding of original sin. Strabo distances himself from it in the *Gloss* on Genesis 3: 17, where Adam is exculpated and is not subject to God's curse:

> Terra maledicitur, non Adam ut cuncti propter quos haec scripta sunt terrerentur, ne similia facientes, simili poena plecterentur. Ipse vero Cain, quia primae praevaricationi fraticidium addidit, maledicitur cum dicitur, *Maledictus eris super terram*. (The earth is cursed, not Adam, so that all for whom this is written should be terrified, and those who do similar things should be punished with a similar penalty. Cain himself, because he added fratricide to the first sin, is cursed when it is said: You will be cursed on earth.) (PL 113, 95)

We saw in the previous chapter that, after the Semi-Pelagians of the early fifth century, there seems to have been no explicit challenge to the Augustinian doctrine of predestination until the fourteenth century. The same is true of original sin. As with predestination, scepticism about this part of the whole nexus of Augustinian doctrine is

also characteristic of the *Moderni.* They shared a weak view of original sin which left the will free to choose the good. William of Ockham, in particular, denies that original sin is inherited. N. P. Williams quotes G. J. Ljunggren: "It is axiomatic with the Nominalists that there is no real connection between Adam and the rest of humanity".[12] Original sin is instead imputed by God to each individual, and all it consists of is the lack of Adam's prelapsarian endowment of intellect, health and goodness, rather than a weakness or even absence of the will to resist evil.

By contrast, Walter Hilton's spiritual teaching is grounded in Augustinian doctrine. He describes the effects of Adam's sin on the human soul:

> But thorugh synne of the first man Adam it was disfigured and forschapen into anothir liknesse, as y have bifore seid. For it fil from that gostli light and that heveneli foode into that peynful myrkenesse and beestli lust of this wrecchid liyf, exilid and flemed out fro the heritage of hevene that it schuld han had yif it hadde stonden, into the wrecchidnesse of this erthe, and aftyrward into the prisoun of helle, ther to have ben withouten ende.[13]

Pearl is another fourteenth-century text with affinities with Augustinian teaching on original sin. The girl accepts the condemnation of mankind through Adam's sin:

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[12] 1926, pp. 413-4, n. 2.
[13] *The Scale of Perfection,* ed. by Thomas H. Bestul ((Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University Press, 2000), p. 134.

Oure forme fader hit con forfete

Thurgh an apple that he upon con byte.

Al wer we dampned for that mete

To dyye in doel, out of delyt,

And sthen wende to helle hete,

Therinne to won wythoute respyt (639-44).

Baptism is its antidote:

The water is baptem, soothe to telle,

That folwed the glayve so grymly grounde,

That wasches away the gyltes felle

That Adam wyth inne deth uus drounde (653-6).[14]

But Julian of Norwich treats the Fall very differently (the euphemism is significant, even more than conventionally). In fact, she rewrites the story in her parable of the Lord and the Servant.[15] She takes the recapitulation doctrine of St Irenaeus even further; Christ is not simply the Second Adam who repeats the experience of the first Adam and thereby reverses its outcome; he actually is Adam. Adam is not blameworthy,

[14] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Cleanness and Patience,* ed. by J. J. Anderson (London: J. M. Dent, 1996), p. 25.
[15] *Julian of Norwich: A Revelation of Love,* ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1993), pp. 72-81.

because his fall is the result of his "good will and his grete desire".[16] Julian has no tree, no serpent and no temptation; therefore there is no original sin, only an unfortunate accident. Adam too is Everyman ("al man"),[17] rather than a primordial historical individual.

Since Langland seems to have been sceptical about predestination, one is led to ask whether he shows the same scepticism over original sin. He quotes Psalm 50: 6 and 8 and Psalm 7: 15-16,[18] but not Psalm 50: 7, John 15: 18 and Romans 5: 12, 9: 21, or I Corinthians 4: 7. This suggests a relatively liberal stance on his part. More positively, since Adam's role in the Bible and church tradition is so large, the question of Langland's stance on original sin will necessitate an examination of how Adam is portrayed in *Piers Plowman*; are Langland's references to him in line with Augustinian teaching on original sin, or does he present him differently? And if the latter, to what extent does the *Gloss* provide him with authority? How does Langland treat the themes of seminal identity and concupiscence?

Before doing so in detail, however, a brief examination of the Pardon scene in B vii will be useful. What does the pardon reveal of Langland's view of the nature of sin? The pardon *a pena et a culpa*[19] sent by Treuthe in B vii 1-3 is a pardon for original sin, so the pardon in B vii 110a-b is for the actual sins of the would-be pilgrims; Repentaunce

[16] Ibid, p. 73.
[17] Ibid, p. 78.
[18] B xviii 379a (C xx 420a), v 276a (C vi 303), ix 122a (A x 150, C x 211a) and xviii 361a.
[19] From punishment and from guilt.

and Piers have, after all, been trying to secure their abandonment of actual sin. If, on the other hand, the pardon is really a direction as to how the human being can win salvation by doing good, then that is only possible if the pilgrims' choice is quite free, uncluttered by the inheritance of original sin.

And so to Adam. On almost all occasions, he is assigned a relatively innocent role, that of the victim of the first sin rather than its perpetrator. God has permitted Adam to sin, from the results of which we all suffer, but sin is sickness rather than moral evil:

> "Now God," quod he {sc. Repentaunce}, "that of Thi goodnesse gonne the world make,
> And of naught madest aught and man moost lik to Thiselve,
> And sithen suffredest hym to synne, a siknesse to us alle -
> And al for the beste, as I bilive, whatevere the Book telleth:
> *O felix culpa! O necessarium peccatum Ade!*"[20] (B v 481-4a).

Since Repentaunce's words convey no condemnation of Adam, the effect of this quotation from the *Exultet* is to minimise his sin by making it unavoidable, and even a good thing, in view of its happy outcome, and to maximise the greatness of the Redeemer.

Original sin is not explicitly treated until the speech of Dame Studie, the most

[20] O happy fault! O necessary sin of Adam!

Augustinian speaker in the poem, in B x 5-136. As she harangues Will, she is clear that the ultimate responsibility for human sin is Satan's, and that, in true Augustinian vein, the will of God is inscrutable. So even here, Adam is let off quite lightly. She complains of the idle nobility criticising God and questioning the received doctrine of original sin in their table-talk:

> I have yherd heighe men etynge at the table
> Carpen as thei clerkes were of Crist and his myghtes,
> And leyden fautes upon the fader that formede us alle,
> And carpen ayein clerkes crabbede wordes;
> 'Why wolde Oure Saveour suffer swich a worm in his blisse,
> That bi[w]iled the woman and the [wye] after,
> Thorugh whiche wiles and wordes thei wente to helle,
> And al hir seed for hir synne the same deeth suffrede?' (103-10).

This contains no positive argument in favour of the doctrine. She then goes on in line 112a to portray the nobility attributing to the clergy, presumably of the *Moderni* school, the same verse, Ezekiel 18: 20, as her husband Wit has quoted in B ix 145a, thus undermining his somewhat muddled preference for a doctrine of individual responsibility. This will be discussed later. All this is in the context of a rant, perhaps unexpected in view of her name, against the indifference of the clergy towards the poor, and the life-style choices of the trendsetting nobility. Her motive is to arouse in Will the desire to make some moral effort, and she ends by directing him to Clergie and Scripture: "They

two, as I hope, after my techynge,/ Shullen wissen thee to Dowel, I dar well undertake" (B x 153-4). This suggests that she has come up against the limitations of Augustinianism for motivating and enabling social and moral reform.

Later in this passus, Will declares that Adam, being no more culpable than anyone else before Christ, is to be saved along with John the Baptist and Isaiah, though after the penitent thief:

> A Good Friday, I fynde, a felon was ysaved
> That hadde lyved al his lif with lesynges and with thefte;
> And for he beknew on the cros and to Crist shrof hym,
> He was sonner ysaved than Seint Johan the Baptist
> And or Adam or Ysaye or any of the prophetes,
> That hadde yleyen with Lucifer many longe yeres (B x 413-8).

Adam is not even listed first and, far from having brought this fate on others, he is only one of Lucifer's victims. Although this insight is attributed to Will in his callow theological stage, it is consistent with what is said later in the poem. Similarly, Trajan calls the kinship of Christ and sinners brotherhood; the human race is both "mennes sones", the issue of Adam and Eve, and "Cristes creatures":

> For alle are we Cristes creatures, and of his cofres riche,
> And bretheren as of oo blood, as wel beggares as erles.

For at Calvarie, of Cristes blood Cristendom gan sprynge,
And blody bretheren we bicome there, of o body ywonne,
As *quasi modo geniti*[21] gentil men echone –
Ne beggere ne boye amonges us but if it synne made:
Qui facit peccatum servus est peccati.[22]
In the olde lawe, as the letter telleth, "mennes sones" men called us,
Of Adames issue and Eve ay til God-Man deide;
And after his resurexcion *Redemptor* was his name,
And we hise bretheren thorugh hym ybought, bothe riche and povere (B xi 198 - 207).

There is no suggestion here of seminal identity or the inheritance of sin, in spite of the reference to physical descent from Adam and Eve; the only sin envisaged is actual (203), although the placing of these words on the lips of the Pelagian Trajan might make us cautious. But in any case, humanity's relationship with Christ in the present has superseded its descent from Adam and Eve in the past.

There may be a parody of Augustine's view of sexual concupiscence in Will's first inner dream, where he sees the animals, unlike men and women, restrained by Reson in the satisfaction of their appetites:

[21] As new-born babies.
[22] The one who commits sin is a slave to sin.

Reson I seigh soothly sewen alle beestes
In etynge, in drynkynge and in engendrynge of kynde.
And after cours of concepcion, noon took kepe of oother
As when thei hadde ryde in rotey tyme (B xi 334-7).

It is as if the post-coital celibacy of animals were a model to be followed by humans. Augustine, as we shall see in chapter seven, believes reason to be the image of God and man's distinguishing feature from the animals, so Will is both challenging Augustine, and at the same time taking up an extreme Augustinian view of sexual behaviour. He then rebukes Reson for not protecting mankind better against falling into sin. Reson in reply tells him to rule his tongue better and to be patient in the face of suffering (375-402). Immediately afterwards, Will wakes from this inner dream and encounters Ymaginatif, who quotes Adam's bad example to threaten him with the loss of "blisse" for speaking to Reson out of turn: "Adam, the whiles he spak noght, hadde paradis at wille;/ Ac when he mamelede aboute mete and entremeted to knowe/ The wisedom and the wit of God, he was put fram blisse" (415 - 7).

So desire for divine knowledge is at the root of Adam's sin, not sexual concupiscence, in line with Augustine. Will is also warned against curiosity by Anima: "Coveitise to konne and knowe science/ Pulte out of Paradis Adam and Eve/ *Scientie appetitus hominem inmortalitatis gloriam spoliavit*" [23] (B xv 61-2a).

[23] The appetite for knowledge deprived man of the glory of immortality.

This recalls the Augustinian *Gloss* on Psalm 8: 9:

> *Pisces maris qui perambulant semitas maris*: curiosi. Haec tria, voluptas carnis, superbia, curiositas, includunt omnia vitia, quae sunt concupiscentia carnis, ambitio saeculi, id est superbia, concupiscentia oculorum. Per oculos enim maxime praevalet. (*The fish of the sea which walk in the paths of the sea*: the curious. These three, the desire of the flesh, pride, curiosity, comprise all vices, which are the lust of the flesh, worldly ambition, pride, that is, the lust of the eyes. Through the eyes, curiosity triumphs overwhelmingly.) (PL 113, 856, based on the *Enarrationes* (PL 36, 115-6))

The echo of I John 2: 16, especially the phrase *concupiscentia oculorum,* discussed in chapter three, reminds us of Will's enticement in B xi and reinforces the condemnation of curiosity. Anima's words are a warning to Will against Adam and Eve's bad example; there is nothing about him inheriting their sin. This differs from Augustine in that there is no seminal identity between Adam and Will and no solidarity of the human race in sin. Adam does not, however, suffer the consequences of his sin alone; all have been deprived of the glory of immortality.

It is significant that it is Ymaginatif and Anima, the two highest of the inner faculties of the human being, who would place limits on the acquisition of knowledge.

The reference to the *archana verba*[24] in B xviii 396a perhaps indicates Will's final acceptance of the limitations of human knowledge.

In addition to the parallel between Adam's and Will's inordinate curiosity, Will's desire for fruit forms another link between them. Speaking of the Tree of Charity, he tells Anima: "I wolde travaille," quod I, "this tre to se, twenty hundred myle/ And to have my fulle of that fruyte forsake al other saulee" (B xvi 10-1). A little later on, he asks Piers to allow him to taste an apple: "I preide Piers to pulle adoun an appul, and he wolde/ And suffer me to assaien what savour it hadde" (73-4). Though Piers might have been expected to refuse Will's request, he accedes to it unhesitatingly, now perceiving nothing presumptuous in it, since it is no longer knowledge that Will seeks, but charity:

> And Piers caste to the crop, and thanne comsed it to crye;
> He waggede widwehode, and it wepte after;
> And when he meved matrimoyne, it made a foul noise,
> That I hadde ruthe whan Piers rogged, it gradde so rufulliche (75-8).

Strangely, Langland uses the word "waggede" both to describe Piers' shaking the tree and the devil's earlier action: "And thanne fondeth the Fend my fruyt to destruye/ With alle the wiles that he kan, and waggeth the roote" (40-1). This suggests an ambiguity in even well-motivated human actions; but this is not the same as implying the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. Perhaps it does imply that human beings are liable to do

[24] Secret words.

destructive and short-sighted things, which give the devil opportunities for the theft of souls. It is, however, difficult to reconcile this episode with the protection of God referred to in the quotation from Psalm 36: 24 in B xvi 25a: "*Cum cecederit iustus non collidetur quia Dominus supponit manum suam*"[25] ; or indeed Reson's rebuke of Will for complaining that the human race should have been protected against sin.

Next, the Devil collects the fruit Piers has shaken from the tree. This appears to re-enact the Fall:

> For evere as thei dropped adoun the devil was redy,
> And gadrede hem alle togidres, bothe grete and smale -
> Adam and Abraham and Ysaye the prophete,
> Sampson and Samuel, and Seint Johan the Baptist;
> Bar hem forth boldely – nobody hym lette –
> And made of holy men his hoord *in Limbo Inferni*,
> There is derknesse and drede and the devel maister (79-84).

Adam is grouped on the Tree with other, by now familiar, pre-Christian figures, whose presence there does not suggest they are a *massa perditionis*; and again he is not singled out from them as being uniquely guilty and deserving of condemnation. He is the devil's victim, as they are, and is treated as a historical individual like them. Though he suffers in Hell, with no theological reason given for his suffering, he is no more culpable than they,

[25] When the just man falls, he will not be bruised, because the Lord puts his hand beneath him.

and there is no sense of human solidarity in sin with him, let alone the transmission of sinfulness or guilt from one generation to another; all have sinned individually. The blame for their "derknesse and drede" falls on the devil. But he has no permanent right to them; they are "Piers fruyt" (B xvi 94 and xviii 20), not a *massa perditionis*.

Adam, Eve and their offspring are later cited as a model of the Trinity (203-8), hardly a resounding emphasis on their fallenness. Though the comparison implies the unity of the human race, there is no mention of original sin as one of the expressions of that unity.

Thus the scene is set for the Harrowing of Hell. In the debate between the four daughters of God, two of them, Truthe and Rightwisenesse, adopt intransigent and authoritarian positions. Truthe numbers Adam and Eve with the patriarchs in "peyne": "For Adam and Eve and Abraham with othere/ Patriarkes and prophetes that in peyne liggen" (B xviii 143-4). By contrast, her sister Pees predicts their salvation: "Adam and Eve and othere mo in helle,/ Moyses and many mo Mercy shul have,/And I shal daunce therto" (177-9). But Rightwisnesse, even more intransigent than Truthe, argues that humanity is a *massa perditionis*, paying the penalty for the sin of eating the forbidden fruit:

> At the bigynnyng, God gaf the doom hymselve -
> That Adam and Eve and alle that hem suwede
> Shulde deyen downrighte, and dwelle in peyne after

If that thei touchede a tree and of the fruyt eten.
Adam afterward, ayeins his defence,
Freet of that fruyt, and forsook, as it were,
The love of Oure Lord and his lore bothe
And folwede that the fend taughte and his felawes wille
Ayeins reson – I, Rightwisnesse, recorde thus with Truthe,
That hir peyne be perpetual and no preire hem helpe.
Forthi lat hem chewe, as thei chosen, and chide we noght, sustres,
For it is botelees bale, the byte that thei eten (190-201).

"Suwede" here means simply "came after"; there is no suggestion of seminal identity or the transmission of sin. Rightwisnesse cannot even contemplate the possibility of their redemption. The inability of prayer to help the souls in hell is a piece of neo-Augustinianism, a logical deduction from the belief that there is nothing that human agency can contribute to salvation, and is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the western church's standard doctrine of damnation.

However, the C-text contains two concessions to traditional Augustinianism. Firstly, B xviii 191 becomes: "That Adam and Eue and al his issue"(C xx 197). Physical descent is here substituted for chronological following, implying seminal identity. Secondly, B xviii 197 becomes: "And folewede þat þe fend tauhte and his flesch will" (203). Here the root of sin in human nature is Adam's concupiscence directed towards the

apple; Eve is exonerated. The sin is not pride here, but gluttony. Like the Doctor in B xiii, Adam and Eve's sin is one of eating, a symbol of greed for knowledge.

Later, Lucifer himself speaks in the same vein as Rightwisnesse: "For hymself seide, that syre is of hevene,/ That if Adam ete the appul, alle sholde deye,/ And dwelle [in deol] with us develes – this thretynge he made" (279-81). Langland seems to suggest that not only is the standard teaching that death and hell are the penalties inflicted on the human race for Adam's sin untenable, it is also diabolical, a facet of Lucifer's claim for rights independent of God. This is intensified in the C-text:

> For hymsulue said hit, þat sire is of heuene,
> That Adam and Eue and all his issue
> Sholde deye with doel and here dwelle euere
> Yf they touched a tre or took þerof an appul (C xx 302-5).

Again, physical descent is substituted for chronological following, and death and hell are entailed on all humanity.

Though Christ himself acknowledges the reason and justice behind the penalty for Adam and Eve's sin, echoing Lucifer's words, he still terminates it, and in doing so, corrects the pessimism and rigidity of Rightwisnesse: "Although reson recorde, and right of myselve,/ That if thei ete the appul, alle sholde deye,/ I bihighte hem noght here helle for evere" (331-3). The mercy of Christ thus erases the condemnation of original sin; a

new solidarity is created, this time between Christ, the new Adam, and the human race, one based on the Incarnation and Baptism:

> Ac to be merciable to man thanne, my kynde it asketh,
> For we beth bretheren of blood, but noght in baptisme alle.
> As alle that beth myne hole bretheren, in blood and baptisme,
> Shul noght be dampned to the deeth that is withouten ende:
> *Tibi soli peccavi*…[26] (376-9a).

The passus ends with Pees congratulating herself that she has "thorugh pacience, all perils stoppede" (417), and Truthe agreeing with her (418-9), thus abandoning her hard-line understanding of the effects of original sin.

Eve is rarely mentioned apart from Adam and has no existence independent of him. Though this may seem misogynistic by today's standards, it still represents an improvement on her presentation in the mystery plays as more than susceptible to temptation, even herself a temptress. For example, in the Chester Play of Adam and Eve, she appears as gluttonous and lustful, and is equated with Lucifer, making her sin one of deliberation. As might be expected, she gets a bad press from St Augustine, some of which finds its way into the *Gloss*, for example on Genesis 3: 1, the full text of which in *De Genesi ad Litteram* reads:

[26] I have sinned against you alone.

Ideo prius interrogavit serpens, et respondit hoc mulier, ut praevaricatio esset inexcusabilis,[27] neque ullo modo dici posset, id quod praeceperat Deus oblitam esse mulierem. Quanquam et oblivio praecepti, maxime unius et tam necessarii, ad maximam culpam damnabilis negligentiae pertineret: verumtamen evidentior ejus transgressio est, cum memoria retinetur, et tanquam in illo Deus assistens praesensque contemnuitur. Unde necessarium fuit, cum in Psalmo diceretur *Et memoria retinentibus mandata ejus* addere *ut faciant ea* (Psalm 102: 18). Multi enim retinent memoria, ut contemnant ea, praevaricationis majore peccato, ubi oblivionis nulla est. (Therefore the serpent first asked and the woman replied, with the result that her betrayal is inexcusable. Nor can it be said otherwise, that the woman forgot what God commanded. Although forgetting the commandment, which is absolutely one and so necessary, would amount to the most grievous fault of damnable failure, nevertheless her wrongdoing is even clearer, since she retains her memory, as if God, standing by and present, is scorned. So it was necessary, as is said in the Psalm *and remembering his commandments*, to add *so as to carry them out*. For many remember them, so as to scorn them by the greater sin of betrayal, where no forgetfulness exists.) (PL 113, 91; 34, 445)

Langland's first reference to Eve alone occurs shortly after Repentaunce's quotation from the *Exultet* referred to earlier: "*Per Evam cunctis clausa est et per Mariam virginem iterum patefacta est*"[28] (B v 603a). Like that quotation, this, from an

[27] The text of the *Gloss* ends here.
[28] Through Eve, {the gate of Paradise} was closed to all, and through the Virgin Mary, it was opened again.

antiphon for the Office of Lauds, where Eve is presented as a type of Mary, has a minimising effect on the former's culpability, since no explanation is given as to how the gate of Paradise is closed through her. However, it is doubtful whether it should be taken as a piece of theological explanation.

Through whose agency, then, does sin come into the world, if not Adam's? The villain of the poem is Lucifer. In the guise of Wrong, he eggs on Adam and Eve and "counseilled Kaym to killen his brother" (B i 63-6). He has already been the instigator and leader of the rebellion of some of the angels of God. He tempts Eve to eat the fruit: "And eggedst hem to ete, Eve by hirselve" (B xviii 288), and lies to her (403). Pride is his motivation: "For pryde that h[ym] pulte out, his peyne hath noon ende" (B i 127). He is the archetypal rebel against the constraints of the human situation, along with Solomon, Samson, Job, Aristotle *et al* (B xii 40-5). Specifically, his rebellion takes the form of an arrogant quest for knowledge. Anima makes his fate a cautionary tale when he rebukes Will for his inquisitiveness over names and titles: "That is sooth," seide he, "now I se thi wille!/ Thow woldest knowe and konne the cause of alle hire names,/ And of myne, if thow myghtest, me thynketh by thi speche!" (B xv 44-6).

Will is far from being embarrassed by this charge: "Ye, sire," I seide, "by so no man were greved,/ Alle the sciences under sonne and alle the sotile craftes/ I wolde I knewe and kouthe kyndely in myn herte!" (47-9). Anima's reply is stinging, but whereas Ymaginatif compares Will with Adam, Anima also compares him with Lucifer: "Thanne

artow inparfit," quod he, "and oon of Prides knyghtes!/ For swich a lust and liking Lucifer fel from hevene" (50-1).

This exemplarist theory of original sin is contrary to Augustine, as we saw in the above extract from the *Gloss* on Romans 5: 12. "Lust" here seems very like concupiscence, but again it is more an intellectual desire than a fleshly one. There follows the comparison of Will with Adam already referred to. So there is a tie of covetousness for knowledge that binds Lucifer, Adam and Will. Yet the tie is not ontological; it is no more than bad example or the repetition of a pattern.

In the Harrowing of Hell passus, Lucifer's authority seems greater than that of Satan, and even the devil himself (B xviii 294, 310). Human beings are the victims; hell is not the result of human wickedness, but the deceit of the devil (293, C xx 324). Faced with the triumphant Christ, the devils turn on Lucifer for his guile (286), treason (293) and "leasings" (310). Even Satan distances himself from him (291). He, however, thinks himself entitled to his rights over against Christ, rights acquired presumably through the sin of Adam: "If he reve me of my right, he robbeth me by maistrie" (276). The insistence on rights over against God and a humiliating squabble are the final outcome of Lucifer's illicit quest for knowledge and status.

Apart from Lucifer, the other character through whom evil has entered the world, according to some passages in *Piers Plowman,* is Cain, although the murder of Abel, the sin of Cain *par excellence*, is only mentioned in B i 66 and C x 245. As we have seen,

Strabo associates his fratricide with Adam's sin.

It is Passus ix in the B-text where Cain is most prominent; he is presented by Wit as the archetype of sin. But though the origin of the wicked is compared with the conception of Cain, it is not caused by it. There is just a simple likeness:

> Ac fals folk and faithless, theves and lyeres,
> Wastours and wrecches out of wedlock, I trowe,
> Conceyved ben in yvel tyme, as Caym was on Eve
> Of which synfulle sherewes the Sauter maketh mynde:
> *Concepit dolorem et peperit iniquitatem*[29] (B ix 119-122a).

Birth images form the basis of this quotation from Psalm 7: 15, but although the various groups of sinners have been conceived in sin, the inheritance of sin again seems to be more the result of following a bad example, rather than the consequences of seminal identity. The identity of the subject of *concepit* is ambiguous; Schmidt makes it "the sinner",[30] and as we have seen, Augustine interprets it as all humanity. Eve is also a possibility. The object of *concepit* is not sinful people, as might have been expected from line 122, but sorrow and iniquity, of which Cain acts as an archetype. However, when the next verse from the Psalm is quoted in B xviii 361a, Lucifer, "gile" personified, is the

[29] He has conceived sorrow and given birth to iniquity.
[30] 1995, 136n.

subject: "And gile is bigiled, and in his gile fallen:/ *Et cecedit in foveam quam fecit.*"[31] So Cain, Lucifer and the generic sinner are elided, but without a causal relationship.

In the C-text, more responsibility is placed on Adam and Eve; Cain's sinfulness is attributed to their lack of repentance: "Caym þe corsede creature conseyued was in synne/ After þat Adam and Eue hadden ysyneged;/ Withouten repentaunce of here rechelessnesse a rybaud þei engendrede" (x 212-4). So Cain was conceived in sin, in line with the Augustinian interpretation of Psalm 50: 7. But there is no mention here of any further inheritance of sin by the generations which follow him. In any case, Adam and Eve could have obviated Cain's sin by repenting of their rebellion against God. So because Adam and Eve have not repented, their child is likewise heedless of God. The form this takes is not so much the specific murder of Abel, as a general disposition for Cain to go his own way, much as Will does in response to the counsel of Rechelesnesse in the B-text.

In the B-text, the culpability is inherited from Cain by all creation, which is then wiped out in the Flood. Wit has God saying to Noah:

> Beestes that now ben shul banne the tyme
> That evere that cursed Caym coom on this erthe.
> Alle shul deye for hise dedes by dales and hulles,
> And the foweles that fleen forth with othere beestes,

[31] And he fell into the pit he dug.

Except oonly of ech kynde a couple

That in thi shyngled ship shul ben ysaved (B ix 137-42).

Wit first accepts, then rejects the doctrine of the heritableness of sin, and finally revives it:

Here aboughte the barn the belsire giltes

And alle for hir forefadres thei ferden the werse.

The Gospel is hereagein in o degree, I fynde:

Filius non portabit iniquitatem patris et pater

Non portabit iniquitatem filii…[32] (143-5b).

This quotation, from Ezekiel 18: 20, contradicts Wit's belief that those drowned in the Flood are punished for the sins of their ancestors, for each person is held responsible for his or her own sin. St Jerome in the *Gloss* expounds verses 19 and 20 with inordinate repetition:

Et dicitis: Quare non portabit[33] *filius iniquitatem patris? Videlicet, quia filius judicium et justitiam operatus est, omnia praecepta mea custodivit et fecit illa; vita vivet. Anima quae peccaverit, ipsa morietur. Filius non portabit iniquitatem*

[32] The son shall not bear the wickedness of the father, and the father shall not bear the wickedness of the son.

[33] Emendation mine, supported by *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria*. Facsimile reprint of *editio princeps* by Adolphus Rusch of Strasbourg, ed. with introduction by Karlfried Froehlich and Margaret T. Gibson (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992).

patris; et pater non portabit iniquitatem filii. Justicia justi super eum erit, et impietas impii erit super illum. Solvit quaestionem, quam e contrario poterat auditor opponere. Soletis, ait, dicere: Quare filius justus non portavit iniquitatem patris? Ad quae ipse respondet: videlicet, quia filius bene operatus est, et patris delicta non fecit. Justumque est, ut quomodo peccator in suo scelere moritur; sic justus in suis vivat virtutibus; et moriatur anima quae peccaverit; et vivat quae Dei praecepta custodierit. (And you say: *Why will the son not bear the iniquity of his father? Clearly because the son has worked righteousness and justice; he has kept all my commandments and done them; his life shall live. The soul that sins, it will die. The son does not bear the iniquity of his father. The judgement of the righteous shall be upon him, and the impiety of the impious shall be upon him.* He answers the question which a hearer might put forward on the opposing side: You are accustomed, he says, to ask why has the righteous son not borne the iniquity of the father? To which he replies: evidently, because the son has done well and not committed the offences of the father. And it is just that the sinner in the same way dies in his wickedness; thus the righteous should live in his virtues; and the soul which sins will die; and he will live who keeps the commandments of God.) (PL 25, 179-80)[34]

In insisting on personal responsibility, Jerome is challenging the heritableness of sin; each person begins life with a clean sheet and complete freedom of will, and is only punished for his own wrong-doing. Wit then contradicts himself and St Jerome, arguing

[34] Migne does not repeat Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel in PL 114.

that children's behaviour is inherited from their parents, although whether this is because of nature or nurture is not examined. He continues:

> Ac I fynde that if the fader be fals and a sherewe,
> That somdel the sone shal have the sires tacches.
> Impe on an ellere, and if thyn appul be swete,
> Muchel merveille me thynketh; and moore of a sherewe
> That bryngeth forth any barn, but if he be the same
> And have a savour after the sire - selde seestow oother:
> *Numquam colligitur de spinis uva nec de tribulis ficus*[35] (143-52a).

The Ezekiel verse is not in the Gospel, whereas the quotation from Matthew 7: 16 is. Even so, the inheritance of sin is not automatic, as the use of the word "selde" suggests. In the C-text, Wit's determinism is intensified:

> Ac þe Gospel is a glose ther and huydeth þe grayth treuthe,
> For god seid ensaumple of such manere issue,
> That kynde folweth kynde and contrarieth neuere.
> *Numquam colligunt de spinis uvas. Et alibi: Bona arbor bonum fructum facit*[36] (C x 240-2a).

[35] The grape is never gathered from thorns, and the fig from thistles.
[36] People never gather grapes from thorns. And elsewhere: a good tree makes good fruit.

Theologically, this is preposterous. The Gospel is said to hide the truth that "kynde folweth kynde", yet two Gospel verses are used to confirm it. Having criticised the words of God about the Flood, Wit is now saying that the Gospel is itself a gloss, revealing that he thinks it is subject to his interpretation, thus imitating the sin of Lucifer and Adam. Not only is this a sign of his lack of theological grasp; it also encourages Will's questionable intellectual curiosity, and reluctance to confront himself and change his way of life.

Interestingly, in the B-text, Wit continues: "And thus thorugh cursed Caym cam care upon erthe,/ And al for thei wroghte wedlokes [Goddes wille ayeines];/ Forthi have thei maugre for hir marriages, [men that marie so now] hir children" (153-5). Though the implication hitherto has been that Cain inherited his sinfulness from his parents, here the sufferings of the world are the result of Cain's sin, not Adam's. Furthermore, the inheritance of sin is sexually transmitted, though exclusively in marriage, chiefly taking the form of marital unhappiness, in both the present and the legendary past. All this recalls the speech of Dame Studie. She quotes Galatians 6: 5 ("Unusquisque onus suum portabit"[37]), but, by placing it on the lips of the idle nobility in B x 112a, makes it vulnerable to question, though it seems to fall on the side of Ezekiel and St Jerome. Another quotation from the same chapter of Galatians ("Alter alterius onera portate"[38]) seems more in the spirit of Langland, with his strong sense of community, and is placed in the mouth of Hunger in B vi 221a, and, more importantly, of Trajan in B xi 210a.

[37] Everyone shall bear his own burden.
[38] Bear one another's burdens.

Wit's view of the heritableness of sin faithfully follows and concretises the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. He acutely describes the enmeshing of human beings in sin through family relationships. But it adds no prestige to Augustine to have the over-confident Wit among his followers; his shortcomings as a theologian imply the shortcomings of his theological teachers. Along the same lines, the unstable and unreliable Conscience has earlier told the story of the disobedience of King Saul, and God's subsequent rejection of him and his descendants, all because of Saul's choice of Mede (B iii 259-79). It should also be remembered from the previous chapter that Augustine, like Ezekiel and St Jerome, has a doctrine of the defectability of some of the righteous who fall away and die in their sins. Following the tearing of the Pardon, Will clearly has a lot to learn. After his unsatisfactory encounter with the friars in B viii 8-61, he finds himself through his obstinacy in various theological back-channels and blind alleys, having fallen back on his own intelligence, personified by Thought and Wit. The repetition of "I fynde" suggests that Wit's words are derived from Will's own limited personal experience and observation; or his own *inventio*, the finding of material for his argument in the few *auctoritates* he knows. Significantly, no other character (apart from Will himself in B x 413) uses parenthetic fillers, which may indicate not merely self-importance, but a certain self-conscious performing on Wit's part. His intellectual self-confidence is misplaced and insecure, and it is not safe to assume that he is Langland's own voice.

In the C-text, Noah's flood follows as a result of the inherited sin of Cain's (presumably) entirely human seed: "Alle þat come of Caym caytyue were euere/ And for

þe synne of Caymes seed sayede god to Noe,/ *Penitet me fecisse hominem*"[39] (x 219-220a). The flood then washes away Cain's sinful progeny, not Adam's: "Clene away þe corsed blood þat of Caym spronge" (225). This implies that the part of the human race not descended from Cain, and not therefore subject to his curse, survived the Flood. Yet disordered marriages continue, regardless of the destruction of the Flood; the result, presumably, of imitation rather than inheritance. Foregrounding Cain serves to weaken the doctrine of the original sin of Adam, since no-one has ever believed there to be seminal identity between Cain and the whole human race. However, since these alternatives to the Adamic origin of original sin are contained in Wit's speech, they cannot be taken seriously as representing Langland's own belief.

A third version of the origin of sin can be found in *Piers Plowman*, the legend of the Fall of the Angels in Genesis 6: 1 - 4, greatly extended and embellished in the pseudepigraphical I Enoch. According to this story, it was the angels' miscegenation with the daughters of men which brought sin into the world. God's wish to purify the world of this sin led to the Flood, which only Noah and his family survived. This version of the origin of sin was never a serious rival to the account in Genesis 3. The narrative in Genesis chapters 6 - 9 is self-contained, not integrated with the preceding chapters. Because of the Flood, it cannot have any continuity with the subsequent history of sin. Nor does it bring in the non-Biblical story of the rebellion of Lucifer. There are, however, slight traces of the story in the New Testament, and it evidently retained some appeal to

[39] I repent having made mankind.

the imagination in the medieval period, since versions of it occur in *Beowulf*, the Old English *Genesis* poem, and the Middle English *Cleanness*.[40]

It is Wit who, again perhaps not perfectly reliably, introduces the story of the Fall of the Angels, combining it with that of Cain. He speaks of a prohibition against intermarriage between the respective offsprings of Cain and Seth:

> And alle that come of that Caym come to yvel ende
> For God sente to Seem and saide by an aungel,
> "Thyn issue in thyn issue, I wol that they be wedded,
> And noght thi kynde with Caymes ycoupled ne yspoused."
> Yet some, ayein the sonde of Our Saveour of hevene,
> Caymes kynde and his kynde coupled togideres (B ix 123-8).

This has no basis in the Bible, according to which the female descendants of Seth marry the "angels" or sons of God, without any commandment of God to the contrary, Cain's descendants apparently having died out. Though this version of events is at variance with the dominant Fall-doctrine of Genesis 3 and the traditional teaching of the western church developed by St Paul and St Augustine, it clearly possessed some ecclesiastical, as well as literary authority, since it can be found in the *Gloss* on Genesis 6: 1, again by Strabo:

[40] *Beowulf and the Finnsburh Fragment,* ed. by Friedrich Klaeber (London: D. C. Heath, 1950), lines 111-4; *The Saxon Genesis,* ed. by A. N. Doane (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), lines 119-26; Anderson, op. cit. 1996, lines 265-92.

> *Videntes filii Dei* etc. Filii Seth religiosi intelliguntur per filios Dei, qui victi concupiscentia, ex filiabus hominum, id est ex stirpe Cain, uxores acceperunt, et viros potentes genuerunt, immensos scilicet corporibus, superbos viribus, inconditos moribus, qui gigantes appellantur. Non est incredibile ab hominibus, non ab angelis, vel quibusdam daemonibus qui mulieribus sunt improbi, ejusmodi homines esse procreatos, quia et post diluvium corpora non solum virorum, se et mulierum incredibili magnitudine exstiterunt. (*The sons of God seeing.* The devout children of Seth are indicated by the sons of God. Overcome by concupiscence, they took wives from the daughters of men, that is, from the stock of Cain, and begot powerful men, evidently huge in body, proud in strength, uncivilised in their ways, which were called giants. It is not incredible to man, nor to angels or certain demons who were unfaithful to their wives; of such a kind men were brought forth, because after the flood, the bodies, not only of men but also women of incredible size, were visible.) (PL 113, 104)

Presumably Cain's presence in this derives from I Enoch. There is no suggestion that the concupiscence of Seth's descendants is attributable to original sin.

Piers Plowman, then, contains a challenge to the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, whose only champion in the poem is Dame Studie. Of the four elements of Augustine's doctrine outlined at the beginning, little trace of acceptance can be found. Firstly, there are few signs, explicit or implicit, of the utter vitiation of the human will, apart from the brewer in B xix, who defies Conscience, or the subjection of the world

under a universal curse because of original sin; Jesus is sent "To save a cursed mannes tilthe" (B xix 436).

Secondly, besides ignoring the doctrines of seminal identity and the inheritance of sin, Langland undermines the Adamic origin of sin by drawing attention to the machinations of Lucifer, thus implying Adam's vulnerability rather than culpability, and by playing down the inheritance of Adam's guilt by subsequent generations. Though sin undoubtedly exists, Langland attributes it to human weakness. This means that his sense of human solidarity is not negatively constituted by sinfulness, but positively, by the Incarnate Christ sharing in human nature.

Thirdly, Langland is unwilling to concede that humanity is now a *massa perditionis* as a result of the Fall, since to make that concession would give the devil permanent rights over most of the human race. Furthermore, the *massa perditionis* trope creates a doctrinal symbiosis between predestination and original sin, which Langland is unwilling to accept.

Fourthly, like Augustine, Langland attributes the sin of Adam to intellectual concupiscence and inordinate curiosity. However, Will shares in this, not by inheritance, but by imitation of Adam's bad example; so his behaviour is in principle avoidable. Perhaps Langland's concentration on intellectual concupiscence, as opposed to sexual, reflects his inclusion of the laity within the poem's audience.

Did Langland have authority for this restraint in handling the doctrine of original sin and his compassionate attitude towards Adam? To what extent does he, in taking up a critical position against Augustine, align himself with the *Gloss*? We have seen how the *Gloss* appears to favour the Augustinian understanding of original sin, unlike predestination; but Langland, perhaps seeing how closely the two doctrines are bound up, takes up a firm position against both Augustine and the *Gloss*. He perceives that believing that original sin is inherited, that humanity is a *massa perditionis,* has the same potential for the evasion of moral responsibility as has belief in predestination. Believing in the ineluctable inheritance of original sin too can undermine belief in free will, personally and philosophically, and result in an amoral life-style; a lack of ethical productivity, in other words. But if people do not see themselves as burdened by the weight of inherited sin, they are no longer passive and fatalistic, but free to take responsibility for themselves and their society. Moral reformation can only be seriously demanded from people who take responsibility for their own actions. Langland's emphasis on human free will to choose or reject bad example thus reinforces his ethical and pastoral goals, and it is evident that he makes no distinction between clergy and laity in this. In short, the acceptance of free will is at least potentially ethically productive; the difficulty lies in whether or not people make use of their freedom, and to what end.

SIX

GRACE, CONVERSION AND RESTITUTION

Having examined Langland's rejection of the Augustinian doctrines of predestination, free will and original sin, we turn now to his treatment of Augustine's doctrine of grace. The question is that if Langland is so insistent on human free will, is he able to accept Augustine's theology of grace, or does he adopt a different one? Not much scholarly attention has been paid to this question, apart from the work of Denise Baker and Robert Adams. Their opinions differ. Adams characterises Langland as a Semi-Pelagian.[1] He examines particularly the synergistic theology of grace in the Tree of Charity, the Pardon and the Lady Mede scenes. Baker, on the other hand, charts Piers' conversion from Nominalism to Augustinianism, arguing that the episode of the pardon is grounded in Augustinian theology.[2] Their contributions will be considered more fully at relevant points during this chapter. In a rarely-cited work, Margaret Goldsmith gives a detailed account of Langland's positive use of Augustine, especially in the Pardon scene, relying largely on the *Confessions.* She offers a more critical view of the legalistic, Old Testament atmosphere of the *Visio* than either Adams or Janet Coleman. However, she is not immune from making connections not justified by the text of the poem.[3]

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[1] 'Piers' Pardon and Langland's Semi-Pelagianism', *Traditio* 39, (1983), 367-418.
[2] 'From Plowing to Penitence; *Piers Plowman* and Fourteenth-Century Theology', *Speculum* 55, (1980), 715-25.
[3] *The Figure of Piers Plowman: the Image on the Coin* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1981).

The corollary of Augustine's predestinarianism is the irresistibility of God's grace in, and the final perseverance of, those foreknown, predestined, called, justified and glorified. It is only God's free grace that saves human beings from eternal damnation:

> a massa perditionis ille qui corripitur, gratiae largitate discretus est (he who is snatched from the mass of perdition by the generosity of grace.) (PL 44, 931)

There is no room here for human actions meriting salvation. Augustine describes several kinds of grace, two of which are relevant for our purpose, namely prevenient or justifying, and sanctifying or co-operant. Prevenient grace is God's choice of a person from all eternity. Sanctifying grace is the constant guidance of grace and the infusion of virtues throughout earthly life, to support the Christian in the good works he has freely chosen. The problem is that this understanding of grace gives no incentive in itself for good works. Grace, if restricted in this way, lacks the power for ethical motivation; it cannot be a reward for merit, for the good works which might be described as merit are themselves the effect of grace.[4]

Overlapping the debate on the nature of grace is another one over the relative necessities of faith and good works. Broadly, belief in prevenient grace goes together with justification by faith alone; belief in sanctifying grace can be made to harmonise

[4] A useful introduction to the doctrine of grace and its history can be found in N. P. Williams, *The Grace of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, revised edition, 1966).

with either justification by faith or by works; but grace as reward goes only with justification by works, for the idea of a divine reward is more likely to motivate the believer to do good works.

The *Gloss* has little to say on the relevant Biblical texts. The *Gloss* on Ephesians 2: 10 ("ipsius enim sumus factura creati in Christo Iesu in operibus bonis quae praeparavit Deus ut in illis ambulemus"[5]), reads:

> *Ipsius enim etc*. Nemo debeat gloriari, quia nos creati in fide et in operibus sumus factura, id est opus ejus, vel sumus creati per factorem, id est operationem ejus; et ita nec de operibus per fidem gloriandum est, cum fides et omnia ex gratia sint. (*His also*… No-one should boast, because, having been created in faith and works, we are his handiwork, that is, his work, or we are created by an agent, that is his working; and so through faith, there is to be no boasting about works, since faith and everything come from grace.) (PL 114, 592)

Such complete dependence on divine grace makes Augustine susceptible to the charge of antinomianism, which he explicitly rules out:

> Homines autem non intelligentes, quod ait ipse Apostolus, Arbitramur justificari hominem per fidem sine operibus legis (Romans 3: 28); putaverunt eum dicere

[5] We are his workmanship created in Christ for good works which God has prepared for us that we might walk in them.

> sufficere homini fidem, etiamsi male vivat et bona opera non habeat. (Failing to grasp what the Apostle says, 'We reckon that a man is justified by faith without the works of the Law,' some men have understood him to say that faith is sufficient for man, even though he lives a bad life and is without good works.) (PL 44, 892)

Yet this does not by itself meet the criticism. If good works depend entirely on God's grace, the human desire to do good is thereby undermined; if the believer fails to perceive such a desire in himself, it is easy to attribute this lack to the absence of God's grace.

A propos of 2 Timothy 4: 8 ("In reliquo reposita est mihi corona justitiae quam reddet mihi Dominus in illa die justus judex non solum autem mihi sed et iis qui diligent adventum ejus"[6]), Augustine asks, in the *Gloss* on Romans 6: 22:

> Cui redderet coronam justus judex si non donasset gratiam misericors pater? Quomodo ista debita redderentur[7] nisi prius illa gratia gratuito donaretur? (To whom would the just judge give a crown, if the merciful Father had not given his grace? How might those debts be repaid, unless that grace were first given free of charge?) (PL 114, 489-90; 44, 890)

The concept of reward only applies as the outcome of grace; there is no merit in good

[6] As to the rest, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the just judge, will give me on that day, not only to me but to those who love his coming.
[7] Emendation mine.

works apart from grace.

Another relevant Biblical text is Philippians 2: 12-13 ("Itaque, charissimi mei, sicut semper oboedistis non ut in praesentia mea tantum, sed multo magis nunc in absentia mea, cum metu et tremore vestram salutem operamini. Deus est enim, qui operatur in vobis et velle et perficere pro bona voluntate"[8]). These verses are relevant for our purpose, though the word "grace" does not appear in them, because a synergy between the divine and human wills is implied in them. In the *Gloss*, Augustine ignores the first sentence of the quotation:

> *Deus enim*. Nec de ipsa perseverentia boni voluit Deus sanctos suos in viribus suis, sed in ipso gloriari: qui eis non solum dat adjutorium quale primo homini dedit: sine quo non possunt perseverare si velint, sed in eis etiam operatur et velle ut quoniam non perseverabunt nisi et possint et velint, perseverandi eis et possibilitas et voluntas divinae gratiae largitate donetur. Tantum quippe Spiritu Sancto accenditur voluntas eorum, ut ideo possint quia sic volunt; ideo sic velint, quia Deus operatur ut velint. (*For God*. Not because of their own perseverance in good by their own strength does God wish his holy ones to boast, but in himself; who not only gives them help of the same kind he gave to the first man: without which they could not persevere if they wished. But he also works in them to will, with the result that, because they will not persevere unless they both could and

[8] Therefore my dearest, as always obey, not only as in my presence but much more now in my absence work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you, both to will and to do according to good will.

would, the power and the wish to persevere are given them by the generosity of divine grace. Their will is indeed so inflamed by the Holy Spirit that they therefore become able to do as they wish; therefore they so wish because God works in them to wish.) (PL 114, 604)

Human free will can thus only operate if God has set it free; and Augustine's teaching is that the free human will will only choose the good.

However, the texts expressing belief in heaven as a reward for good works, namely Psalm 61: 13[9], Matthew 16: 17[10], Romans 2: 6[11], I Corinthians 3: 14[12], Hebrews 11: 6[13] and Apocalypse 18: 6[14] and 22: 12[15] are not commented on in the *Gloss*.

As with free will and original sin, the doctrine of grace also became a battleground between the neo-Augustinians and the *Moderni* in the fourteenth century. The Franciscan theologians of the previous century had already developed a doctrine of grace rewarding anyone who does *quod in se est ex puris naturalibus,*[16] specifically good works, for example Alexander of Hales (d. 1245), who writes:

[9] Et tibi misericordia quia tu reddes unicuique secundum opus suum. (And to you belongs mercy, for you render to each one according to his work.)
[10] Et {Filius hominis} reddet unicuique secundum opera ejus. (And the Son of Man will render to each one according to their works.)
[11] Qui reddet unicuique secundum opera ejus. (Who repays each according to his works.)
[12] Si cujus opus manserit quod superaedificavit, mercedem accipiet. (If his work, which he has built upon it, survives, he will have a reward.)
[13] Et inquirentibus se remunerator sit. (And he rewards those who seek him.)
[14] Reddite illi sicut et ipsa reddidit vobis: et duplicate duplicia secundum opera ejus. (Do to her just as she has done to you; and repay her double according to what she has done.)
[15] Ecce venio cito, et merces mea mecum est, reddere unicuique secundum opera sua. (Behold, I will come quickly, bringing my reward with me, to render to each one according to his works.)
[16] What is in him arising from basic natural qualities.

> Quod ergo Deus in homine faciente quod in se est, imprimat formam nobilem, quae est gratia; hoc est ex sola liberalitate sua & non ex aliquo quod debeat homini facienti quod in se est; quia homo faciens quod in se est, adhuc est indignus ante susceptionem gratiae. (Because God imprints on the man who does what is in him a noble form, which is grace; this is from generosity alone, and not from something he owes to the man who does what is in him; because a man who does what is in him is still unworthy before receiving grace.)[17]

The *Moderni* restricted grace solely to divine reward, for if original sin and all its effects are not inherited, it follows that the will is free to do good works without divine grace. Therefore grace in the sense of divine help in this life is unnecessary, and there is no place for the infusion of charity into the human soul by God's grace. Grace can therefore be received only after this life, making it the reward of good works, not their cause. This could be interpreted as God being placed under obligation to reward the good, a conclusion which Alexander resists.

The Augustinian revival, sketched in chapter four, had a more creative effect amongst contemporary spiritual writers. As well as predestination, Walter Hilton teaches Augustine's doctrine of the irresistibility of divine grace and the completeness of human dependence on God for all good works. He describes, in true Augustinian vein, how perfect love is unattainable by human effort:

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[17] *Summa Theologiae*, Part III, qu. 61, mem. 5, res. 3. (Cologne: Johann Gymnich, 1622), Vol. 2, pp. 479-80.

> And also anothir skille is this: yif that there were oon certayn deede by whiche a soule myghte come to perfighte love of God, thane schulde a man wene that he myght come therto bi his owen werke and thorugh his owene traveile…But thane, for to have Hym mai no creature deserve oonli thorugh his owene travaile, for though a man myghte travelen bodily and gostili as mykil as alle creatures that evere were myghten, he myghte not deserven oonli bi his werkes for to have God for his mede.[18]

Attempting to humanise what can seem a mechanistic view of God, he puts these words into the mouth of Jesus:

> "Seeth onli hou I, Jhesu, God doo; bihalde yee Me, for I doo al. I am love and for love I doo al that I do, and ye do nought. That this is sooth y schal schewe yow, for there is no good deede doon in yow ne good thought felt in yow, but if it be doon thorugh Me, that is, thorwgh might, wisdom and love, that is mightily, wittily and lovely, ellis it is no good deede".[19]

God enables the soul to see that Jesus does everything:

> For He dooth al; He formeth and He reformeth. He formeth oonli bi Hymsilf, but He reformeth us with us; for grace goven, and appliynge of our wille to grace,

[18] *The Scale of Perfection,* ed. by Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University Press, 2000), p. 173.
[19] Ibid. p. 224.

werketh al this. And upon what maner wise He dooth that, Seynt Poul reherseth thus: *Quos deus prescivit fieri conformes ymaginis Filii eius, hos vocavit; et quos vocavit, hos iustificavit; quos iustificavit, hos magnificavit; quos magnificavit, hos glorificavit*[20] (Romans 8: 29-30).[21]

But at other points, Hilton rejects the irresistibility of grace. Some desire grace, but "bi hire owen frowardenesse, thei stoppe the light of grace from hir owen soule".[22] So there has to be co-operation between God and the soul. People need to prepare their souls to receive grace "as mykil as they mowen".[23] Both grace and great personal efforts have a part to play.[24] Hilton also shows an awareness of the antinomian risks of a complete reliance on grace, especially the choice of "ydelnesse of fleschlihede".[25]

In *Pearl*, the grace of God is entirely decisive for the eternal destiny of the soul; there is no place for human effort. The very concept of heavenly reward is undercut by the poem having as its focus a two-year-old child, too young even to have learned the Paternoster and the Creed. The Dreamer believes in Heaven as a reward, with gradations of status according to earthly merit. He paraphrases the proof-text on reward, Psalm 61: 13, in line 595. So he is incredulous that a child should have such an exalted place in Heaven.

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[20] Those whom God foreknew to be conformed to the image of his Son, he called; and those whom he called, he justified; and those whom he justified, he magnified; and those whom he magnified, he glorified.
[21] Ibid. p. 199.
[22] Ibid. p. 165.
[23] Ibid.
[24] ibid. p. 172.
[25] ibid. p. 174.

Pearl, by contrast, adopts some Augustinian positions. For example, she quotes with approval Matthew 20: 16, which is so important for Augustine and causes such difficulties for Will: "For mony ben called, thigh few be mykes" (572).[26] This is during a retelling of the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (501-76), which undermines any notion of strict reward for work done by presenting the lord of the vineyard paying all his workers the same, however long they have worked. Pearl insists on the perfect equality of the saved in Heaven. She quotes approvingly St Paul's image of the Body of Christ (457-68), itself originally aimed at those jockeying for position and prestige in the church. She speaks lyrically of the grace of God poured out on all alike, regardless of merit:

> For ther is uch mon payed inlyche,
> Whether lyttel other much be hys rewarde.
> For the gentyl Cheventayn is no chyche,
> Quether-so-ever he dele nesch other harde;
> He laves hys gyftes as water of a dyche,
> Other gotes of golf that never charde (603-8). [27]

Like Conscience, who uses it as a proof-text for the necessity of an upright life, Pearl refers to Psalm 14, but prefers paraphrase to quotation:

> Lorde, quo schal klymbe thy high hylle,

[26] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Cleanness and Patience,* ed. by J. J. Anderson (London: J. M. Dent, 1996), p. 22.
[27] Ibid. p. 23.

Other reste wythinne thy holy place?

Hymself to onsware he is not dylle;

'Hondelynges harme that dyt non ille.

That is hert bothe clene and light,

Ther schal hys step stable stylle' (678-83).[28]

The answer, however, only specifies the negative qualification of clean hands and a pure heart, and lacks the Psalm's positive commitment to good works and the condemnation of bribery.

Pearl also advises the Dreamer that when he comes to judgement, he should not behave as if salvation is his due from God, as we have seen, the implied belief of at least one of the *Moderni*. If he

Alegge the right, thou may be innome

By thys ilke speech I have asspyed –

Bot he on rode that blody dyed,

Delfully thurgh hondes thryght,

Gyve the to passe, when thou arte tryed,

By innocens and not by ryghte (703-8).[29]

[28] Ibid. p. 26
[29] Ibid. p. 27.

As a two-year-old, Pearl is an extreme case, but the *Pearl*-poet doubtless regards the complete dependence on divine grace which she epitomises as universally applicable. As well as spiritual quietism, *Pearl* also expresses a social and political quietism foreign to Langland, and arguably inappropriate for responsible and educated adults.

Where is Langland situated in this controversy? How does God's grace work in *Piers Plowman*? In the *Visio*, grace is presented as a reward and a gift or payment for works done. Lady Holi Chirche unequivocally asserts the Semi-Pelagian teaching on the necessity of works for faith, deriving from James 2: 26:

> For James the gentile jugged in hise bokes
> That feith withouten feet is [feblere] than nought,
> And as deed as a dorenail but if the dedes folwe:
> *Fides sine operibus mortua est*[30] (B i 185-7a).

This flies in the face of Augustine's denial of the saving effect of good works. The *Gloss* on this verse, an abbreviated paraphrase of Bede's *Super Divi Jacobi Epistolam*, clarifies the relationship:

> Cum enim bona opera commemorat Abrahae, quae ejus fidem comitata sunt, satis ostendit apostulum Paulum, non ita per Abraham docere justificari hominem, per fidem sine operibus, ut si quis crediderit, non ad eum pertineat bene operari, sed

[30] Faith without works is dead.

> ad hoc potius, ut nemo arbitretur meritis priorum bonorum operum se pervenisse ad donum justificationis quae est in fide. (For when he recalls Abraham's good works, which accompanied his faith, he shows enough that Paul the apostle does not teach through Abraham that man is justified by faith without works, in case anyone should believe that it was not relevant to him to do good works; but rather that no-one should think he had come to the gift of justification which is in faith, by the merits of previous good works.) (PL 114, 675; 93, 22)

The last phrase is crucial; works before conversion do not merit salvation, so justification is therefore a gift. But good works are integral to the life of faith, an insight too often ignored in later centuries, and one which guards against antinomian conclusions being drawn from justification by faith.

Conscience first explicitly introduces the doctrine of grace as a reward for good works: "That oon God of his grace graunteth in his blisse/ To tho that wel werchen while thei ben here" (B iii 232-3).

Initially, Piers too believes in justification by works; he speaks of being paid by God: "I have myn hire of hym wel and outherwhiles moore./ He is the presteste paiere that povere men knoweth" (B v 550-1). Soon after, in his teaching about the inner pilgrimage, Piers again has grace following good works, not preceding them (B v 561-608). Far from being an unmerited gift to sinners, people have to qualify for grace. Grace, as gateward, admits the penitent to the shrine of Saint Truth (595 and 629); grace is

obtainable through the help of Christ and his mother, here called Mercy, provided people arrive early (638). In line with the Semi-Pelagian insistence on good works, ploughing the half-acre becomes a substitute for pilgrimage, after some of the newly-penitent sinners get cold feet and decide not to go. Piers himself regards the ploughing as the real pilgrimage: "I wol worshipe therwith Truthe by my lyve,/ And ben His pilgrim atte plowe for povere mennes sake" (B vi 101-2). Truth seems to affirm Piers' intention by sending the pardon and commands him to stay at home and plough (B vii 1-4).

Denise Baker claims that "ploughing represents the Nominalist view that man can earn grace through good works; that he can, without any special help from God, 'do wel and haue wel'".[31] She claims that Passus vii depicts a crisis in Piers's spiritual life; the pardon scene is "the occasion of Piers's conversion from a Nominalist theology of works to an Augustinian theology of grace".[32] She identifies the reading of the pardon as the infusion of prevenient grace, but with no support from the text. The pardon itself is, as the priest says, not a pardon at all; all it consists of are two lines from the Athanasian Creed (which significantly begins: "Whosoever will be saved…"): "*Et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam aeternam;/ Qui vero mala, in ignem aeternum"*[33] (B vii 110a-b).

Once apprised of the pardon's content, Piers tears it up. He quotes Ps 22: 4 ("Si

[31] 'From Plowing to Penitence: *Piers Plowman* and Fourteenth-Century Theology', *Speculum*, 55 (4) (1980), 720.
[32] Ibid, 724.
[33] Those who have done good will enter eternal life; those who do evil, into eternal fire.

ambulavero in medio umbre mortis, non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es"[34]) in lines 116-7 as a statement of faith, according to Baker, and a realisation that he cannot do good works without grace. On the strength of that, he apparently defies Truth's command, rejects work, preferring to engage in prayers and penance, and redefines ploughing:

> "I shal cessen of my sowynge," quod Piers, "And swynke noght so harde,
> Ne aboute my bely joye so bisy be namoore;
> Of preieres and of penaunce my plough shal ben hereafter,
> And wepen when I sholde slepe, though whete breed me faille" (118-121).

In the light of this, Baker comments: "Piers's 'pure tene' is therefore directed against himself, for he recognises that he has been a fool".[35]

Baker's interpretation has a number of weaknesses. Firstly, in interpreting the pardon scene as Piers turning away from works towards grace, she fails to give weight to Piers' hostility to the priest. The latter is a scoffer who does not understand the true nature of God's reward. In the confrontation between him and Piers which follows the reading of the pardon, he sneers at Piers' lack of theological training and ranks him with the fool (136). Piers retaliates, ranking him with the *derisores* of Proverbs 22: 10 (138a) who, Adams shows, were regularly equated with heretics, hypocrites and immoral teachers of false doctrines.[36] The priest has placed himself in the position of an infidel

[34] Though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I shall not fear evil, because you are with me.
[35] Ibid, 722.

because he has failed to recognise the Athanasian Creed and has dismissed Truth's pardon as a fraud. And because Lady Mede has already quoted the preceding half-verse from Proverbs 22: 9: "*Honorem adquiret qui dat munera*"[37] (B iii 336a), Langland seems to imply that the priest and she are in the same camp; the priest does not appreciate the requirement for people to do something in order to receive God's pardon, and in Adams's words, like Lady Mede, prefers "disregard for any merit or demerit in recipients".[38]

Secondly, Piers' choice of an ascetic way of life could be interpreted as a good work in itself; it is certainly not presented as depending on grace. And if he is now justified by grace, it is surprising that the command *redde quod debes* should dominate his teaching and practice in Passus xix. So the tearing of the pardon may represent the impracticability of a simplistic doctrine of works, and the beginning of the search for a more realistic and authentic way, that of *redde quod debes*.

Thirdly, Baker tries to answer the objection that since the pardon comes from Truth, it should be immune from criticism or rejection. She argues that it signifies human inability to carry out the law; but there is no evidence for this in its wording, and the fact remains that in the A- and B-texts, Piers tears it up. Obviously, as most people seem to recognise, if the pardon demands good works, it cannot be a pardon in the accepted sense.

Fourthly, Baker's argument is only tenable if abstracted from the poem as a

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[36] 'Piers' Pardon and Langland's Semi-Pelagianism', *Traditio*, 39 (1983), 411, n. 94.
[37] He who gives presents will acquire honour.
[38] Ibid.

whole. The *Visio*'s emphasis on works in fact stems from the teaching of Lady Holi Chirche, which throughout the poem seems immune to criticism. And as this study shows, while individual voices adopt Augustinian views on some doctrines, Augustinianism is contested by the experience of Will himself, whose early spiritual growth is impaired by his adoption of predestination.

The C-text differs from the B-text in that Piers accepts and welcomes the pardon and the tearing is omitted. This undoubtedly aids clarity, and it is hard to quarrel with R. W. Frank's claim that the omission "suggests the essential meaning of the poem is communicated without [Piers' reaction]".[39] But in the B-text, the tearing is even harder to comprehend in the light of Piers' acceptance of the call to do well.

Whatever happens to Piers at this point, Will is not converted in an Augustinian sense. He only comments on the pardon itself and the priest's dismissal of it. In the course of this, he also sees Mary as the enabler of good works; she obtains the grace that is necessary to carry out good works as God commanded:

> Forthi I counseille alle Cristene to crie God mercy,
> And Marie his moder be oure meene bitwene,
> That God gyve us grace here, er we go hennes,
> Swiche werkes to werche, the while we ben here,

[39] *Piers Plowman and the Scheme of Salvation; an Interpretation of Dowel, Dobet and Dobest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 27.

That after oure deth day, Dowel reherce

At the day of dome, we dide as he highte (B vii 196-201).

We have already reviewed some of Will's encounters in B viii-x. At the end of B x, he rejects the intellectualism he sees as dominating Christian practice, and aligns himself with the manual workers who: "passen purgatorie penaunceless at hir hennes partyng/ Into the blisse of paradis for hir pure bileve,/That inparfitly here knewe and ek lyvede" (463-5). Their faith, undisturbed by learning, brings them to Paradise, though they have not lived morally better lives than the learned. However, the last line reveals the antinomian pitfalls of justification by faith alone, perhaps resulting from the clergy's failure to preach about ethical behaviour.

In the C-text, Rechelessnesse, having declared himself an opponent of Clergie, takes over this anti-intellectual diatribe and its doctrine of justification by faith alone. "Pure bileve" now becomes "parfit" (xi 298), and grace is superior to learning:

Ac y countresegge the nat, Clergie, ne thy connyng, Scripture,

That ho-so doth by ȝoure doctrine doth wel, y leue.

Ac me were leuere, by oure lord, a lyppe of goddes grace

Thenne al þe kynde wyt þat ȝe can bothe and kunnyng of ȝoure bokes (225-8).

He adds that nothing one does on one's own can achieve salvation, and that works are

therefore irrelevant, even an obstacle to grace: "For mony men in this molde more sette here herte/ In goed then in god; forthy hem grace faileth" (231-2). This is grace in the *Moderni* sense of final reward by God, rather than Augustinian sanctifying grace. But far from being an authority figure, Rechelessnesse should be seen as a personification of Will's moral evasiveness.

To return to the B-text, perhaps the most important character in Langland's debate over grace and works is the pagan Roman emperor Trajan. The salvation of the heathen is incompatible with strict Augustinian soteriology; in the *Contra Julianum*, for example, for a heathen to be righteous would be a contradiction in terms.[40] But Langland seems to present us with something diametrically opposite. Trajan "was ded and dampned to dwellen in pyne/ For an uncristene creature" (B xi 142-3). But nevertheless he was delivered from hell, centuries after his death, by the tears and desire of Pope Gregory:

> for the soothnesse that he {sc. Pope Gregory} seigh in my werkes.
> And after that he wepte and wilne me were graunted grace,
> Withouten any bede biddyng his boone was underfongen,
> And I saved, as ye may see, withouten syngynge of masses,
> By love and by lernyng of my lyvynge in truthe (147-51).

So grace is a reward for good works. Trajan claims to have been saved for his "loue and leautee and {his} lawful domes" (145), his "pure trouthe" (155), his "leel love and lyvyng

[40] PL 44, 475.

in truthe" (161); he has done *quod in se est ex puris naturalibus*, in other words. Without any "leal bileue", he did good works of his own free will (C xii 85). This echoes Holcot's treatment of the freedom of the human will, and independence from God's grace for doing good.

After this, Trajan turns to more orthodox teaching. "Love and leautee" is equated with the law of Moses (168-9). Law is to be tempered by love (170, 174), which is grounded in the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, which was for all (198-210a). Then comes a quite unexpected switch to the doctrine of justification by faith, with the reference to Jesus' forgiveness of the woman of the city: "For whatevere clerkes carpe of Cristendom or ellis,/ Crist to a commune womman seide in commune at a feste/ That *fides sua* sholde saven hire and salven hire of alle synnes" (215-7). This recalls Will's crude belief in justification by faith alone in B x 463-5, though here the woman's faith has dominical approval.

However, with Trajan all may not be as it seems. As David Aers has shown, doing *quod in se est* does not necessarily lead to ethical behaviour; on the contrary, it may take the form of Will's behaviour in the Land of Longynge and the brewer's refusal to accept Conscience's directions, saying "þat is my kynde".[41] The same applies to Trajan; if he was as just, loving and "lele" as he claims, enough to get him out of hell, why was he there in the first place? How could his obedience to the law have brought him to hell? His

[41] *Salvation and Sin: Langland, Augustine and Fourteenth-Century Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), p. 99.

speech is incoherent and self-justifying, lacking humility and self-criticism; the fact that his conscience is clear does not mean that he is right. Janet Coleman sees Nominalism in Ymaginatif's view of Trajan, for example C xiv 215-7: "And þat is loue and large hyre, yf þe lord be trewe,/ And a cortesye more þen couenant was, what so clerkes carpe,/ For al worth as god wol".[42] According to Ymaginatif, Trajan is saved through the "cortesye" of God, in other words through his *potentia absoluta*, beyond law, sacraments, Scripture and the authoritative teaching of the Church. "Cortesye" represents God's free grace, arising not out of love, but an arbitrary will. The fact that Ymaginatif takes Trajan at face value is another defect in the former's wisdom.

Towards the end of B xi, Will shows himself more Augustinian than Ockhamist. His vision of Middelerthe ends with a complaint to Reson: "I have wonder of thee, that witty art holden,/ Why thow ne sewest man and his make, that no mysfeet hem folwe" (B xi 373-4). Perhaps there is an echo here of Augustinian sanctifying grace, which Will expects to be called into action to prevent the elect from sinning.

The doctrine of the salvation of the heathen on the basis of good works performed *ex puris naturalibus* is again challenged in Anima's speech later in the B-text. It is initially surprising to find *sola fides sufficit*[43] invoked in relation to both non-Christians and "lewed peple": "As clerkes in Corpus Christi feeste syngen and redden,/ That *sola fides sufficit* to save with lewed peple /- And so may Sarsens be saved, scribes and Jewes"

[42] *Piers Plowman and the Moderni* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1981), p. 135.
[43] Faith alone suffices.

(xv 387-9). Though we are again reminded of Will's crude doctrine of justification by faith in B x 463-5, the context indicates that this is not part of a faith versus works debate, but an opening towards believers from other faith traditions. With regard to the "lewed peple", *sola fides sufficit* seems appropriate on the lips of the establishment clergy anxious to keep the laity from getting too interested in theology, even at the risk of them neglecting the demands of charity and becoming lawless and immoral.

Earlier in B xv, there is an implicit belief in grace as gift. Anima contrasts the clerks with Piers, who perceives God's will and the purpose of human suffering more deeply:

> "Clerkes have no knowing," quod he, "but by werkes and by wordes.
> Ac Piers the Plowman parceyveth moore depper
> What is the wille, and wherfore that many wight suffreth:
> *Et vidit Deus cogitaciones eorum*"[44] (198-201).

The superior insight of Piers into the will of God can only be the result of participation by grace in God's knowledge of humankind, of which more in chapter eight. In particular, Piers grasps "wherfore that many wight suffreth", which contrasts with Will's earlier indignation at what he considers Reson's failure to ensure that humans are defended against suffering (B xi 373-4).

[44] And God sees their thoughts.

In the C-text at this point, Anima adds: "By clothing ne by carpynge know shaltow hym neuere/ Ac thorw werkes thow myghte wyte wher-forth he walketh,/ *operibus credite*!"[45] (xvi 338-9a). The *Gloss* on this saying, from John 10: 38, reads: "Fidem adhibete operibus, ut merito fidei amplius cognoscendo opera, veniatis ad fidem deitatis." (Apply the faith in works, so that by learning works more fully by the merit of faith, you may come to the faith of godhead.) (PL 114, 398). So the practice of faith and works are bound together, and raise the believer to oneness with God. This recalls Lady Holi Chirche (B i 185-7a). Piers' participation in God is revealed by his good works, the works of Christ himself. Grace is not mentioned here, but, as in James 2: 26 and Bede's exegesis of it, faith and works are integrated and equally essential for a genuine relationship with God.

In the following Dobet passūs (B xvi-xviii, C xviii-xx), Langland's preferred position is a synergy between grace and good works chosen by human free will, which forms a mediating position between Augustine and the *Moderni.* For Augustine, as we have seen, God's grace takes the form of his choice of those to be saved, a providential safeguarding of them from falling into sin and a co-operation with them to make their good works possible. But for Langland, grace requires that faithfulness and holiness of life be already present before it can even begin to grow; and it depends on people's external circumstances, as well as their internal lives. Even before the Dobet passūs, Ymaginatif makes the point:

[45] Believe in the works. (Further treatment of this saying will be found in the next chapter.)

Ac grace ne growth noght but among [gomes] lowe:
Pacience and poverte the place is ther it growth,
And in lele lyvynge men and in lif holy,
And thorugh the gifte of the holy Goost (B xii 60-3).

The reference to the Holy Spirit reads like an afterthought. The corresponding lines are toned down in the C-text:

Ac grace is a graes þerfore to don hem efte growe;
Ac grace ne growth nat till gode-wil gyue reyne
And woky thorw gode werkes wikkede hertes.
Ac ar such a wil wexe worcheth god sulue
And sent forth the seynt spirit to do loue sprynge;
Spiritus ubi vult spirat[46] (xiv 23-27a).

In addition to the emphasis here being placed solely on the inward by the omission of "pacience and poverte", the Holy Spirit's role is now more causal in making it possible to "do loue sprynge" in the human soul, before "gode-wil" can grow. This emphasis on gracious divine initiative represents an adjustment in an Augustinian direction. But Will makes no response to this.

Returning to the B-text, Anima begins to express the synergy between God and

[46] The Spirit blows where he wills.

man more explicitly: “So thorugh God and goode men groweth the fruyt Charite” (B xvi 9).

In the corresponding passage in the C-text, Liberum Arbitrium leads Will into “a contre, *Cor Hominis*” (xviii 4), where grows the Tree of Charity, *Ymago-Dei*, the image of God in the human person (7), which is able to produce fruit (called “werkes”). But there is no suggestion that the tree does so by the aid of infused grace; the fruitfulness of the image of God is one of the uncontested givens of creation.

In the B-text, however, Liberum Arbitrium, being incapable of resisting the devil *ex puris naturalibus,* depends completely on God’s grace: “Thanne *Liberum Arbitrium* lacceth the thridde planke/ And palleth adoun the pouke pureliche thorugh grace” (xvi 50-1).

In true Semi-Pelagian vein, the Samaritan pronounces that God’s mercy is his response to human compassion. Grace is what the Holy Spirit offers to human beings, but if he is rejected, the result is condemnation: “So is the Holy Goost God, and grace withoute mercy/ To alle unkynde creatures that coveite to destruye/ Lele love other lif that Oure Lord shapte” (B xvii 215-7). Grace needs human receptivity to become effective. The Samaritan continues:

> And as glowyng gledes gladeth noght thise werkmen
> That werchen and waken in wyntres nyghtes

As dooth a kex or a candle that caught hath fir and blaseth,
Namoore doth Sire ne Sone ne Seint Spirit togideres
Graunte no grace ne forgifnesse of synnes
Til the Holy Goost gynne to glowe and to blase;
So that the Holy Goost gloweth but as a glede
Til that lele love ligge on hym and blowe.
And thane flawmeth he as fir on Fader and on *Filius*
And melteth hire myght into mercy – as men may se in wyntre
Ysekeles in evesynges thorugh hete of the sonne
Melteth in a mynut while to myst and to water.
So grace of the Holy Goost the greet myght of the Trinite
Melteth to mercy – to merciable and to noon othere (218-31).

Grace here is identified with charity; it is an attribute of the Holy Ghost who is himself God. The Holy Ghost will only glow "but as a glede" till "lele love" blows him into flame; and this also effects a change of heart in God. Yet whatever the Samaritan says about grace evokes no response from Will, either verbally or in a change in his behaviour. He does not receive enlightenment from the Samaritan as he does from Ymaginatif or Anima.

There is, however, a change of emphasis in the Dobest passūs (B xix-xx, C xxi-xxii), from a conditional understanding of grace to one in which grace is available

unconditionally for the whole human race. In B xix, it is again explicitly identified with the Holy Spirit; after Will has witnessed the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit, Conscience tells him:

> "This is Cristes messager,
> And cometh fro the grete God – Grace is his name.
> Knele now," quod Conscience, "and if thow kanst singe,
> Welcome hym and worshipe hym with *Veni Creator Spiritus*!"[47] (208-11).

The crowd, unusually including Will, cries out: "Help us, God of grace!" (213), and Grace announces that he is to:

> dyvyde grace
> To alle kynne creatures that kan hise five wittes –
> Tresour to lyve byto hir lyves ende,
> And wepne to fighte with that wole nevere faille (216-9).

The fighting is to be against Antichrist. Everyone receives grace for personal guidance and the good of society: "And gaf ech man a grace to gye with hymselven,/ That Ydelnesse encombre hym noght, ne Envye ne Pride:/ *Divisiones graciarum sunt*"[48] (228-9a). The list of graces that follows is much more comprehensive than St Paul's in I

[47] Come, Holy Spirit.
[48] There are diversities of gifts.

Corinthians 12, encompassing the whole range of secular skills needed to maintain the fabric of society. Grace goes on to provide Piers with the materials needed for the barn of Unite and the cart of Baptism "to carie home Piers sheves" (324-333) and accompanies him on his worldwide mission. Then he vanishes. Later, according to the "lewed vicory," Piers ploughs "For a wastour and wenches of the stewes/ As for hymself and hise servaunts, save he is first yserved" (439-40). It is consistent with Langland's reforming purpose that grace is made available to the laity as well as the clergy; but it is strange that Will is mostly a spectator, and not apparently a beneficiary of any specific grace.

So Langland's concept of grace is that the power of God is at work within the human soul to develop and encourage love and faithfulness to God and one's neighbour. The form this characteristically takes in *Piers Plowman* can be summed up in the command, *Redde quod debes*.[49] The original context of the command in Matthew 18: 23-35 is the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant; the servant utters it as a violent demand for money from his fellow-servant. In *Piers Plowman*, however, Langland glosses it to express God's just claim on human beings. In this, he has no support from the *Gloss*, which has nothing to say about restitution in this context, and only two extracts on other relevant texts, namely Matthew 6: 12 ("et dimitte nobis debita nostra"[50]), of which more later, and Luke 6: 38, ("eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis remecietur vobis"[51]) quoted at B i 178a and xi 226. The *Gloss* on this verse, however, adds little:

[49] Pay back what you owe.
[50] And forgive us our debts.
[51] With the same measure with which you have measured, it will be repaid you.

> Generaliter de omnibus potest accipi, quae mente, manu et lingua aguntur, quia secundum opera singulorum reddet Deus. (Generally it can be accepted about all things done by mind, hand or tongue, because God will render according to the deeds of each one.) (PL 114, 264)

Redde quod debes has a double meaning; firstly, giving God the love and obedience owed him, as Grace commands in B xix 260-1, and secondly, as we shall see, sinful humans making restitution for their sins against others. Restitution is grounded in the practice of God towards human beings. In the shape of the substitutionary death of Christ, it is needed before "rihtwisenesse" can turn to "ruth" (B xvii 315). *Redde quod debes* is not in fact an extortionary demand, but stems from the human need for the mercy of God, provided that people are merciful in their own behaviour to others. The Samaritan asks "How myghte he aske mercy, or any mercy hym helpe,/ That wikkedliche and wilfulliche wolde mercy aniente?" (B xvii 286-7).

Langland realises, however, that inducing people to make restitution is not easy. As we saw in chapter two, Repentaunce has difficulty in communicating to Coveitise not only the need for restitution, but even what the word actually means (B v 234-5). He insists on the necessity for restitution of what has been taken away from others, quoting surprisingly from St Augustine: "*Non dimittitur peccatum donec restituatur ablatum*"[52] (272a).The importance of this quotation is underlined by its repetition by the Samaritan in B xvii 306a. It is as if he were quoting Augustine against the contemporary neo-

[52] The sin is not put away until what was stolen is restored (PL 33, 662).

Augustinians, replying to their emphasis on predestination and human helplessness by demonstrating that there is another, more ethical Augustine besides the implicit sanctioner of unethical behaviour.

Even Sloth, congenitally opposed to all effort, can see that restitution is necessary. Echoing Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-10), he says:

> And yet [what I nam] wolde I yelde ayein, if I so muche have –
> Al that I wikkedly wan sithen I wit hadde;
> And though my liflode lakke, leten I nelle
> That ech man shal have his er I hennes wende (B v 456-9).

It is not always practical, however, for the penitent sinner to make restitution: "Roberd the robbere on *Reddite* loked,/ And for ther was noght [wher]with, he wepte swithe soore" (461-2). He prays for mercy: "So rewe on this Rober[d] that *Reddere* ne have/ Ne nevere wene to wynne with craft that I knowe" (468-9). A veil is drawn over his subsequent fate; his inability to make restitution is unresolved. In the C-text, the demand for him to make restitution is dropped; it is enough that he appeals to the crucified Christ, repents and cries for mercy (vi 316-25). Repentaunce responds generously: "By þe rode," quod Repentaunce, "thow romest toward heuene,/ By so hit be in thyn herte as I here thy tonge./ Trist in his mechel mercy and ȝut þou myhte be saved" (331-3). This suggests that mercy is only for those without the means to make restitution. Perhaps recalling the

undetermined fate of Robberd, penitence, in the absence of the ability to make restitution, is enough to save the penitent thief, according to Will (B x 413-20). But Ymaginatif begrudges the thief's presence in Heaven, placing him lower than the saints (B xii 201-8), though this may be related to his concern for the protection of social hierarchies noted in chapter two. He cannot account for God's decision to admit the thief into heaven:

> And right as Troianus the trewe knyght tilde noght depe in helle,
> That Oure Lord ne hadde hym lightly out, so leve I [by] the thef in hevene;
> For he is in the loweste of hevene, if oure bileve be trewe,
> And wel losely he lolleth there, by the lawe of Holy Chirche,
> *Quia reddit unicuique iuxta opera sua*[53] (209-12a).

The quotation from Psalm 61: 13 is the same one that the Dreamer paraphrases in *Pearl*. However, in the context of *Piers Plowman*, its application is not general, but restricted to the thief. This suggests the doctrine of reward, though the lowest place in heaven was all that the thief deserved. But it also suggests that *redde quod debes* is grounded in the practice of God himself, who gives people what they have deserved. However, Ymaginatif falls back, first on a belief in the mystery of divine mercy, then on a Nominalist voluntarism:

> Ac why that oon theef upon the cros creaunt hym yelde,
> Rather than that oother theef, though thow woldest appose,

[53] Because he repays each one according to their works.

Alle the clerkes under Crist ne kouthe the skile assoille:

Quare placuit? Quia voluit![54] (B xii 213-5a).

This makes grace a matter of divine freedom rather than love.

In line with his teaching on grace, the Samaritan restricts the mercy of God to those who are themselves merciful and make restitution: "So wol the Fader foryyeve folk of mylde hertes/ That rufully repenten and restitucion make/ In as muche as thei mowen amenden and paien" (B xvii 230-237). As in the rest of the Dobet passūs, there is a most un-Augustinian emphasis on the conditionality of forgiveness, the corollary of the synergistic understanding of grace.

In B xix, *Redde quod debes* is what Piers is to receive as the fulfilment of human obligation to God. Grace announces the explicit connection between himself and restitution: "For I make Piers the Plowman my procuratour and my reve,/ And registrer to receyve *Redde quod debes*" (260-1). Restitution is also the precondition of the absolution he can now bestow (xix 188, C xxi 187). The only thing that people cannot be absolved of is their debts: "Thus hath Piers power, be his pardon paied,/ To bynde and unbynde bothe here and ellis,/ And assoille men of alle synnes save of dette one" (189-91). Once people have repented, made restitution and begun to live "leally", then Christ will reward them: "Anoon after an heigh up into hevene/ He wente, and wonyeth there, and wol come at the laste,/ And rewarde hym right wel that *reddit quod debet*" (192-4, C xxi 191-3).

[54] Why does it please him? Because he wills it!

In the form of restitution, *redde quod debes* is a necessary preliminary to absolution and being permitted to receive Holy Communion (391, C xxi 390), and the means of securing pardon from Piers (xx 308, C xxii 308). But it is rejected by "al the comune" (xix 395, C xxi 391). Conscience reminds them that that God's forgiveness is conditional on human forgiveness: "Or ech man foryyve oother, and that wole the Paternoster –/ *et dimitte nobis debita nostra*"[55] (398-a). Like Conscience, the *Gloss* on this verse highlights the worldly implications of this petition:

> Scientia quippe ad usum temporalium pertinet, quae virtus est, in vitandis malis et petendis bonis, ut nostra et aliorum contagia ploremus, bona cupiamus… Pecuniam alicui repetere conceditur sed debita peccatorum petenti veniam nunquam juste negamus. (Knowledge, which is virtue, is clearly relevant to the use of temporal things, in avoiding sins and seeking good things, so that also we should weep for our sins and desire good things… It is permitted to demand money back, but we never rightly deny the debts of sinners by seeking pardon.) (PL 114, 102)

This seems to echo Augustine's saying about restitution. The "comune's" rejection is not on explicitly neo-Augustinian grounds; but as we have seen with belief in predestination and the physical inheritance of original sin, the slackness over penance and the lack of ethical teaching to which Augustinianism risks giving rise has left too many people with a sense that they are licensed to sin.

[55] And forgive us our debts.

After this, the pessimism intensifies. The "comune's" rejection of *redde quod debes* and the *Spiritus Iusticiae* leads in B xx to the invasion of Antichrist, and the subversion of the Barn of Unite, where refusal to make restitution is compounded by the practice of giving what should have been restored to the victim to the friars instead, which they then spend on their pleasure:

> Ac while he is in Westmynstre he wol be before
> And maken hym murie with oother mennes goodes
> And so it fareth with muche folk that to freres shryveth
> As sisours and executurs; thei shul yyve the freres
> A parcel to preye for hem and [pleyen] hem murye
> And with the residue and the remenaunt that othere [renkes] biswonke
> And suffer the dede in dette to the day of doome (288-93).

This is a wilful failure to make genuine restitution; it merely salves the conscience of the avaricious without remedying the loss to their victims. We recall that debt is excluded from the absolution pronounced by Piers.

Similarly, in the C-text, Will is unable to meet the friars' expectation of money in restitution for ill-gotten gains: "And flittyng fond y the frere þat me confessede/ And saide he myhte nat me assoile but y suluer hadde/ To restitue resonably for al vnrihtfole wynnynge" (C xii 15-17). Yet in the *Visio*, with its more utilitarian morality, Hunger has

sanctioned the prudent disposal of misappropriated assets: "Yf thow hast wonne auht wikkedliche, wiseliche dispene hit" (C viii 235).

What is the final outcome of Langland's treatment of grace? Of the three facets outlined at the beginning of this chapter, prevenient grace is not present in *Piers Plowman*. Will is not saved by God's free grace; indeed the poem ends with his salvation still unsecured. There is no sign that he is one of the elect or that he has been given the grace of final perseverance. Nor is there any sign of sanctifying grace; though by the end of the poem, Will has acquired enough intellectual and spiritual maturity to take his share of responsibility for the state of the church on earth, he has not apparently been aided by grace, but neither has he reached this point *ex puris naturalibus*. He has come as far as he has by a process of reflection on his experience in the light of the western Christian tradition; and by faith in the leadership of Piers, the authoritative expression of the saving purpose of God.

Grace as a reward, however, is present. This is consistent with Langland's ethical interests, especially the necessity of restitution. While there is a dialectic between grace as freely available to all and grace as a reward for good works and making restitution, both of which bear witness to significant facets of Christian experience, the balance at the end tilts in favour of God's grace being made conditional on people making restitution for their ill-gotten gains. This is the most ethically productive theology of grace; everything depends upon the human will making an effort to do good works and make restitution. So grace is received after this life as a reward. This doctrine of grace offers a

challenge to Augustine's, although in this instance the *Gloss* does not support Langland's position; the extracts on grace in the *Gloss* are mostly from Augustine, and the *Gloss* has little to say about the main justification by works texts quoted in the poem, other than James 2: 26.

SEVEN

THE IMAGE OF GOD

In previous chapters, we have reviewed Langland's treatment of the nexus of Augustinian doctrines of predestination, free will, original sin and grace. We turn now to various questions raised by the doctrine of original sin, including whether sin has destroyed the image of God in man, or merely obscured it, and weakened the natural knowledge of God; whether or not man's creation in the image of God implies natural goodness; and in what sense man after the Fall can still share in the divine nature. Given Langland's positive valuation of free will and his liberal understanding of original sin, does he also value the doctrine of the image of God in the same way? Not much attention has been paid to this doctrine in *Piers Plowman*, except by Margaret Goldsmith[1] and Barbara Raw.[2] Raw, amidst some dubious claims (is it safe, for example, to assume that Langland was familiar with Anselm or Aelred?), posits the image of God as the basic concept of the whole poem. She claims that the three stages of the image of God, as described by Aquinas (natural aptitude "ad intelligendum et amandum Deum"; the disposition for knowing and loving God, though not practising; and perfect knowledge and love of God) are reflected in the Dowel, Dobet and Dobest structure of the poem.[3] This rests on a clearer definition of these three than exists in the poem.

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[1] *The Figure of Piers Plowman: the Image on the Coin* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1981).
[2] 'Piers and the Image of God in Man', in *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches,* ed. by S. S. Hussey (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 143-79.
[3] ST 1a, 93, art. 4.

As in earlier chapters, it will be useful to orientate this discussion against the background of St Augustine, insofar as his doctrines of the human knowledge of God and the image of God in man are represented in the *Gloss*. As we saw earlier, in some of his writings, Augustine believes that as a result of original sin, humanity is nothing but a *massa perditionis*, and, though he insists that the image of God has survived the Fall, he comes close to denying it by opposing any possibility of the survival of natural goodness in humanity. Yet in other writings, he has a doctrine of the image of God being constituted by reason which is able to contemplate divine truth. Four extracts from his writings in the *Gloss* on Genesis are particularly important. The first is his discussion of the actual verses on which the doctrine of the image of God rests, Genesis 1: 26-7:

> Ait faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram…et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam, ad imaginem Dei creavit illum masculum et feminam creavit eos. (God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness…" And God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.)

Augustine's exposition proceeds in an unexpected direction:

> *Faciamus hominem*. Insinuatur pluralitas personarum Patris et Filii et spiritus sancti, et statim deitatis, cum dicitur: "Et fecit Deus hominem ad imaginem Dei," non Pater ad imaginem tantum Filii. Non enim vere diceretur ad imaginem nostram; sed ita dictum est: "Fecit Deus hominem ad imaginem Dei," ac si

diceretur “ad imaginem suam”. Cum autem dicitur “ad imaginem Dei,” cum superius dictum sit “ad imaginem nostram,” significatur quod non agit pluralitas personarum, ut plures deos credamus, sed ut Patrem, et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum unum Deum accipiamus. (*Let us make man*. The plurality of persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is implied, and at the same time, of Godhead, when it is said, “And God made man in the image of God”, not the Father in the image of the Son only. For indeed it should not have been said “in our image”: but thus it is said, “In his image”. Since, however, it is said, “in the image of God,” when it was earlier said, “in our image”, it is signified that the plurality of persons does not result in us believing in many gods, but accepting Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God.) (PL 113, 79-80)

Two things are apparent in this exegesis. Firstly, Augustine fails to expound the implications of the crucial phrase *ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram* in terms of the nature of man, most strikingly the difference of gender. Secondly, instead he uses these verses as a proof-text for the doctrine of the Trinity.

However, in the next excerpt but one in the *Gloss*, the creation of man in the image of God is present. Augustine interprets this purely intellectually as enabling a sufficient likeness between God and man for the human mind to relate to God through the medium of contemplation. He writes:

Ut scilicet intelligamus in hoc factum hominem ad imaginem Dei, in quo

> irrationalibus antecellit. Id autem est ratio, vel mens, vel intelligentia, vel si alio nomine commodius vocetur, in quo scilicet contemplandae veritati inhaeret. (So evidently, we should understand by this that man is made in the image of God, in which he excels all irrational creatures. This indeed is reason, or mind or intelligence, or if it might be more appropriately called by another name, through which it clearly has an affinity for the truth that is to be contemplated.) (PL 113, 80)

Augustine proposes a doctrine of the image of God in man being constituted by reason, thus making reason the salient feature of God's nature; all other human faculties are excluded, not least man's (and God's) ability to form relationships. But interestingly, no trace appears of human depravity which would negate such a humanistic view of the capabilities of the human race. The possession of reason also defines the superiority of man to the animal creation. Contemplation, on this understanding, seems to be a purely mental activity, with no physical or public consequences.

In the third extract, Augustine highlights the connection between the divine image in man, and man's intellectual nature, resulting ultimately in the deification of humanity:

> Notandum quod sicut in creanda luce dicitur: "Fiat lux" et statim sequitur "et facta est lux" sic cum dicitur, "Faciamus hominem" infertur "et fecit Dominus hominem ad imaginem dei" quia ista natura intellectualis est, sicut illa lux: et hoc est ei fieri quod agnoscere Verbum, per quod fit etc. (It is to be noted what is said

> likewise in creating light: "Let there be light", and immediately there follows "and light was made". So when it is said, "Let us make man", it is implied, "And the Lord made man in the image of God", because that is the true intellectual nature, just like that light; and because it is in man to become what he acknowledges the Word to be, through whom he is made.) (PL 113, 80-1)

He here explains more fully what he means by "affinity" in the previous extract. It is apparent that this is a highly abstract understanding of deification. The image of God is equated with man's intellect, and conformity with the Word, the image of God, is seen as the fulfilment of human intellectual potential. There are four problems here.

The first is that this purely intellectual understanding of the Word is without reference to relationships with God or other people, let alone with the human body or emotions. Secondly, Augustine fails to guard against a possible misrepresentation; he can be interpreted as implying equality with God, rather than resemblance. Human moral stature in this life is not a matter of achievement but of potentiality. The third is that the Incarnation of the Word is not mentioned, with the result that all that that implies of the nearness of God to man, and God's concern for the everyday world of social and political relations is excluded. The Word remains remote, and access is reserved to an elite. The fourth is that no mention is made here of the Word, as the second Person of the Trinity, being assigned the role of channel of God's creative activity, as in John 1: 3: "Omnia per

ipsum facta sunt et sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est."[4] This omission is most surprising in a gloss on a verse from one of the Old Testament creation narratives.

The possibility of deification, of human beings coming to share in the divine nature through the Word, may seem a startling one, coming from St Augustine. In defending the divinity of Christ, Augustine's predecessors such as St Athanasius asserted that salvation is not simply liberation from sin and its effects, but sharing in God's own nature. So, as Augustine himself preached: *Factus est Deus homo ut homo fieret Deus.*[5] From this a whole tradition of prayer developed, in which the sharing of the divine nature was foreshadowed on earth in the union of love between God and the soul. In the western church, this teaching is most closely associated with St Bernard. But though Bernard actually uses the word *deificari* in *De Diligendo Dei* x 28, unlike Augustine, he understands the word in a purely affective sense.[6] But this tradition is often just as elitist and devoid of ethical content as the Augustinian.

The fourth extract reveals another example of Augustine's intellectualisation of the image of God:

> Sexto die producit terra animam vivam, id est homo de stabilitate suae mentis, ubi habet fructus spirituales, id est bonas cogitationes; omnes motus animi sui regit, ut sit in illo anima viva, id est rationi et justitiae serviens; non terrenitati et peccato.

[4] Everything was made through him, and without him, nothing was made that was made.
[5] God was made man that man might become God (PL 38, 1997).
[6] PL 182, 991.

> Ita fit homo ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei, masculus et femina, id est intellectus et actio; quorum copulatione spiritualis fetus terram impleat, id est carnem subjiciat, et caetera quae jam in hominis perfectione dicta sunt. (On the sixth day the earth brings forth a living soul, that is, man, with the stability of his mind, where he produces spiritual fruits, that is, good thoughts; the motion of his mind rules everything, so that in him, there is a living soul, that is, a servant of reason and righteousness, not earthliness and sin. Thus man is made according to the image and likeness of God, male and female, that is intellect and action; from whose coupling spiritual offspring fills the earth, that is, subjects the flesh and all other things which are now commanded for the perfection of man.) (PL 113, 81-2)

The allegorisation of male and female, and the spiritualisation of their offspring, is characteristic of Augustine; it is as if his equation of flesh with sinfulness is so profound that any danger of the literal flesh being mentioned has to be immediately avoided. The result is that the image of God again is solely intellectual, and moral terms like righteousness remain on the level of abstraction. Isidore of Seville, in glossing the Augustinian gloss, seeks to remedy some of its deficiencies by introducing concrete human relationships and moral behaviour, even though "virtue" is still an abstraction:

> Sexto die producit terra animam vivam, quando caro nostra ab operibus mortuis abstinens, viva virtutum germina parit, secundum genus suum, id est vitam imitando sanctorum. Unde I Cor. iv: "Imitatores mei estote" etc. Secundum genus nostrum vivimus, quando sanctos quasi proximos imitatur. (On the sixth day, the

> earth produced a living soul when our flesh, abstaining from dead works, brought forth living seeds of virtues, according to its kind, that is a life of imitating the saints. Whence I Cor. iv: "Be imitators of me" etc. Let us live according to our kind, when we imitate the saints as if they were neighbours.) (PL 113, 79)

As we saw in chapter five, imitation is a source of great anxiety for Augustine. He sees it as the quest for a sinful and self-seeking likeness to God in power and knowledge. He writes, "superbia perverse imitatur Deum".[7] The desire to be like God is in fact at the root of original sin. Perhaps it is because he is so alarmed at the possibility of creatures trying to imitate God in sinful ways that he so strictly confines the image of God to reason.

Walafrid Strabo too, in the *Gloss* on Genesis 3: 2, is clear that the desire to be godlike is at the root of the seduction practiced by Satan:

> *Eritis sicut dii.* Artificiali dolo verba componit, ut si per inobedientiae contemptum subvertere nequivit, saltem in hoc quod fidem corruperit, et idolatriam suaserit, victorem se glorietur: si autem per inobedientiae contemptum, seduxerit in utroque victor existat. (*You shall be as gods*. With insincere deception, he composes his speech, so that, if he should be unable to undermine through the scorn of disobedience, at least he would glorify himself as victor in that which would corrupt faith and commend idolatry; if, however, he were to seduce through the scorn of disobedience, he would prove to be victor in both

[7] Pride perversely imitates God (PL 41, 639).

cases.) (PL 113, 92)

The anonymous author of the *Gloss* on Romans 2: 14, however, explicitly presents us with a humanity in which the image of God is not destroyed:

> Non enim usque adeo in humana anima imago terrenorum affectuum labe detrita est, ut nulla in ea lineamenta remanserit. Non omnino deletum est quod ibi per imaginem Dei, cum homo crearetur impressum est. Proinde vitio sanato per gratiam, naturaliter fiunt ea quae legis sunt. Non quod per naturam negata sit gratia, sed potius per gratiam reparata natura; qua gratia in interiori homine renovato lex justitiae rescribitur, quam deleverat culpa. (For up to this point, the image in the human soul is not destroyed by the taint of earthly passions, with the result that no image survives in those features. That which is imprinted through the image of God, when man was created, is not utterly destroyed. Accordingly, once vice has been healed by grace, naturally the passions become those which are lawful. It is not that grace is negated by nature, but rather nature is restored through grace; by which grace, having been renewed in the inner man, the law of justice, which guilt effaced, is rewritten.) (PL 114, 475-6)

This differs from Augustine in that the renewal of the image of God here results in moral behaviour rather than clearer intellectual knowledge. It also follows from this that if the image of God is unimpaired, or only partially impaired, then some degree of natural knowledge of God is possible, and this is confirmed by the *de facto* alliance between

nature and grace in this passage.

As in so many other respects, the influence of Augustine remained strong throughout the Middle Ages; for example, the second Constitution of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) sharply differentiates God and humanity:

> Inter Creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quis inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda. (Between Creator and creature, one can never affirm as much likeness as there is unlikeness.)[8]

So in the medieval theological mainstream, the doctrines of man's knowledge of God and the image of God are inseparable, and other facets of the image of God are excluded. Against this background, we can now examine how Langland understands the image of God in man. Is it intellectual or moral? Insofar as it has been impaired, how is it restored? As we see from the dialogue between Will and Lady Holi Chirche in B i, Will's bias from the start is towards the intellectual; for much of the poem, his interests are so intellectual as to distract him from embarking on a loving way of life. He treats morality as if it were only a by-product of knowledge:

> Thanne I courbed on my knees and cried hire of grace,
> And preide hire pitously to preye for my synnes,
> And also kenne me kyndely on Crist to bileve,

[8] Quoted by Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998), p. 29.

That I myghte werchen His wille that wroghte me to manne:
"Teche me to no tresor, but tel me this ilke -
How I may save my soule, that seint art yholden?" (B i 79-82).

In reply, Lady Holi Chirche puts the moral before the intellectual. For her, the key to sharing in the divine nature is participation in Trewthe, the characteristic name for God in the *Visio*: "Whan alle tresors arn tried," quod she, "treuthe is the best./ I do it on *Deus caritas* to deme the soothe;/ It is as dereworthe a drury as deere God hymselven" (85-87). Truth is not an intellectual abstraction, as in the second extract from Augustine, but the moral qualities of faithfulness and charity, so that right living and sharing in the divine nature mean above all to be faithful and charitable. She makes much of man's capacity for saving knowledge of God, for he is capable not merely of doing good, but of being like Christ. Insofar as human beings practice "trewthe", they share in God's nature:

[For] whoso is trewe of his tonge and telleth noon other,
And dooth the werkes therwith and wilneth noon man ille,
He is a god by the Gospel, agrounde and olofte,
And ylik to Oure Lord by Seint Lukes wordes (88-91).

Telling the truth and living accordingly is a very different understanding of sharing in the divine nature from St Augustine's intellectual or St Bernard's affective sense.

To speak of the Christian sharing in the divine nature is striking, though Derek

Pearsall, commenting on the parallel passage in C i 84-7, is dubious that this is what Langland intends.[9] He sees here a reference to Luke 6: 35 ("Diligite inimicos vestros et benefacite et mutuum date, nihil desperantes et erit merces vestra multa et eritis filii Altissimi"[10]). But "wilneth no man ille" is not even a paraphrase of "Love your enemies". Pearsall also makes reference to St John 10: 34 ("Respondit eis Jesus, 'nonne scriptum est in lege vestra quia ego dixi, "Dii estis"?'"[11]), but does not elaborate. The context of this verse is, however, the controversy with the Jewish leaders over Jesus' claim to divinity, and has no bearing on the divine image in man.

Returning to the dialogue between Lady Holi Chirche and Will in B i, Will admits he has no natural knowledge of Truth: "Yet have I no kynde knowynge,' quod I, 'Yet mote ye kenne me better/ By what craft in my cors it {sc. Treuthe} comseth and where" (138-9). She replies that "kynde knowynge" consists of the love of God and one's neighbour, redirecting it from the intellectual to the moral, in spite of using words like "teche" and "lere":

> It is a kynde knowynge that kenneth in thyn herte
> For to loven thi Lord levere than thiselve,
> No dedly synne to do, deye theigh thow sholdest –
> This I trowe to be truthe; who kan teche thee better,

[9] 1994, p. 46, n. 86.
[10] Love your enemies and do good and lend, hoping for nothing in return, and your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High.
[11] Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I have said, "You are gods"?'"

Loke thow suffer hym to seye, and sithen lere it after;
For thus witnesseth his word; werche thow therafter (142-7).

However, God's powerful intervention is needed for this perception to begin:

And for to knowen it kyndely – it comseth by myghte
And in the herte, there is the heed and the heighe welle -
For in kynde knowynge in herte there [com]seth a myghte –
And that falleth to the Fader that formed us alle
Loked on us with love and leet his son dye
Mekely for oure mysdedes, to amenden us alle (163-8).

"Myghte" in line 163 seems more naturally to be God's; but in line 165, it seems to refer to a human spiritual capacity for love, grounded in "kynde knowynge in herte". Again, like "trewthe" in B i 88 and 137, the use of the same word, "myghte", to refer to both God and humanity, suggests a sharing in the same "kynde". Langland does not explicitly identify "kynde knowynge" with the image of God; but it is hard to resist the view that they are identical, and indeed the opening of C xviii, with its references to *Cor Hominis* and *ymago dei*, also implies this. This passage will be examined later.

Before this, Lady Holi Chirche has spoken of the works of the Incarnate Christ being motivated by love (150) which is "moost lik to hevene" (151). Love is "ledere of the Lordes folk of hevene,/ And a meene, as the mair is, [inmiddes] the kyng and the

commune;/ Right so is love a ledere and the lawe shapeth" (159-61). Human love therefore is grounded in the love of the Incarnate Word; it extends beyond personal relationships to facilitate social relationships and transform the bonds of society.

So clearly Lady Holi Chirche is not interested in abstractions; for her, the commonality between God and man is not mystical, but ethical. She is an idealised Church, whose teaching is untrammelled by institutional compromises with the world, and who offers loving care to her children. Her teaching is never actually contradicted in the rest of the poem, even though revelation and divine intervention become more prominent later on; indeed, far from correcting her teaching, the rest of the poem is an unfolding of many of the implications of what she says, not least *redde quod debes* (B i 52-3), and *Deus caritas* (86).

Piers develops the idea of truth dwelling in the human heart like "kynde knowynge":

> And if grace graunteth thee to go in in this wise,
> Thow shalt see in thiselve Truthe sitte in thyn herte
> In a cheyne of charity, as thow a child were,
> To suffren hym and segge noght ayein thi sires wille (B v 605-8).

As in Lady Holi Chirche's teaching, truth and charity are inseparable (B i 85-7). At the end of the passus, he teaches the kinship of Christ with sinful humanity:

Mercy is a maiden there, hath myght over hem alle;

And she is sib to alle synfulle, and hire sone also,

And thorugh the help of hem two – hope thow noon oother -

Thow myght gete grace there – so thow go bityme (635-8).

The theme of the image of God reappears more explicitly later, when Will encounters Wit, who begins by being in certain respects a spokesman for Augustinian doctrine. Wit begins by describing how Kynde (God the Creator) has built a castle, the human body, in which he has enclosed a soul (B ix 1-7). Though superficially line 6 may be taken as an expression of romantic love, this is nevertheless an allegory. Wit makes explicit the creation of humanity in the image of God:

Aungeles and alle thing arn at his wille,

Ac man is hym moost lik of marc and of shafte.

For thorugh the word that he spak woxen forth beestes:

Dixit et facta sunt.[12]

And made man [moost lik] to himself one

And Eve of his ryb bon withouten any mene.

For he was synguler himself seide *Faciamus*[13] –

As who seith, "Moore moot herto than my word oone:

My myghte moot helpe now with my speche" (29-37).

[12] He spoke and they were made.
[13] Let us make.

Apart from the odd references to the physical resemblance between God and man, and the creation of Eve "withouten any mene", this is in line with Augustine's Trinitarian exegesis of Gen: 1: 26-7, as in the second extract above, though Wit is more precise in the conclusion he draws from *faciamus*, in that his Trinitarian exegesis of the word includes the involvement of God's "myghte", the Holy Spirit, as well as the Word, in the creation of humankind. Wit also says that God has created the world through his Word; so by ascribing to the Word an active role in creation, he avoids the danger of treating him as a passive object of contemplation.

He continues, for now, in a similar vein:

And thus God gaf hym a goost, of the godehede of hevene,
And of his grete grace graunted hym blisse -
And that is lif that ay shal laste to al his lynage after.
And that is the castel that Kynde made, *Caro*[14] it hatte,
And is as much to mene as "man with a soule."
And that he wroghte with werk and with worde bothe;
Thorgh myght of the mageste man was ymaked.
Inwit and alle wittes yclosed ben therinne
For love of the lady *Anima*, that lif is ynempned (46-54).

[14] Flesh.

Four points need to be made here. Firstly, the spirit of man relates him to the Godhead (46), though this is not developed. Secondly, in line 47, "blisse" seems to refer to the bliss of heaven, as if "lif that ay shal laste" were part of man's natural endowment, and not impaired, let alone forfeited by original sin. Thirdly, line 51 contains echoes of the fourth extract from the *Gloss*; "is as much to mene" is a paraphrase of *id est*, and the earthliness of *caro* is immediately glossed as "man with a soule". Fourthly, the last sentence alludes to the attributes of the human soul, the true intellectual nature, as St Augustine calls it in the passage quoted earlier, or, as Langland calls it, "inwit and alle wittes", derived from God's own nature. Inwit is particularly interesting. Sir Inwit is the Constable of the Castle of *Caro,* one of the defenders of Anima (B ix 17-18). Quirk points out that normally in Middle English, "inwit" translates *animus*; its meaning comes close to "conscience" only when it is used to translate *intellectus*. But, he says, Inwit cannot be identified with Conscience who is a separate (and sometimes fallible) character; yet "conscience is rather one aspect of Inwit's activity; it is Inwit's awareness of right and wrong brought to bear upon one's actions; it is inwit in action".[15]

Wit has already put some flesh on Augustine's abstractions; but his major advance on his master comes at this point, as he makes reference to the "herte" as the moral centre of the human person, though the soul directs it:

> Over al in mannes body he[o] {sc. Anima} walketh and wandreth,
> Ac in the herte is hir hoom and hir mooste reste.

[15] 'Langland's Use of Kind Wit and Inwit', *JEGP*, 52 (1953), 185, 188.

Ac Inwit is in the heed, and to the herte he loketh

What *Anima* is leef or loth – he lat hire at his wille (57-58).

Wit then leaves behind the Augustinian understanding of the image of God. Instead of a mere status, it becomes actual through love, whereby humans are deified, but again in a moral, not an intellectual or affective sense: "And alle that lyven good lif are lyk God almighty:/ *Qui manet in caritate, manet in Deo*"[16] (64-a). As well as echoing Lady Holi Chirche's words, *Deus caritas,* we recall that Repentaunce has already quoted this verse, I John 4: 18, more fully in his sermon in B v. Moreover, he glosses this quotation with a fuller version of one of Wit's favourite texts, B ix 41a:

For thorugh that synne Thi sone was sent to this erthe

And bicam man of a maide mankynde to save –

And madest Thiself with Thi Sone us synfulle yliche:

Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram;[17] *Et alibi,*

Qui manet in caritate, manet in Deo, et Deus in eo[18] (485-7b, omitted in C).

The implication of the linking of the two verses is that the image of God in man consists of living in love. The link implies criticism of Augustine's failure to draw ethical conclusions from his Trinitarian exegesis of Genesis 1: 26-7. But at the same time, we are presented with a movement in the other direction, God making himself through his Son

[16] He who lives in love lives in God.
[17] Let us make man in our own image and likeness.
[18] He who lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

like sinful mankind. This divine adoption of the image of man recurs elsewhere in *Piers Plowman,* as the following chapter will reveal. So it is the Incarnate Word, not simply, as in Augustine, the Word as the Second Person of the Trinity, who opens up the possibility of human beings living in God through love.

To return to Wit, he then draws attention to the way the image of God in man has been ruined by drink: "Allas! That drynke shal fordo that God deere boughte,/ And dooth God forsaken hem that he shoop to his liknesse" (65-6).

In the C-text, lines B ix 46-50 are missed out, and it is now sin in general which mars the soul's likeness to God: "Man is hym most lyk of membres and of face,/ And semblable in soule to god, but if synne hit make" (C x 156-7).

Though Wit may start with the personifications of an allegorical romance and continue through Augustinian abstractions, he departs from Augustine in interpreting the image of God in a moral sense. There seems to be a thorough-going rejection of Augustine's intellectual understandings of both the Word of God and the image of God in man. But this time, unlike other doctrines surveyed in this study, it is not a case of Langland appealing to the *Gloss* against Augustine; the *Gloss* on Genesis 1: 26-7 contains Augustine's deficient theology against which Langland reacts. Langland is left to find, or perhaps create for himself, an alternative theology of the image of God in man suitable for his reforming programme.

But as we saw in chapter five, Wit is not necessarily a wise guide. What he says is far from furthering Will's search for Dowel, for he offers no guidance as to how love might take shape in society or the individual. It is also significant that his key image is of a castle, a place of secure stasis, whereas Will prefers to go on pilgrimage with its inevitable exposure to temptation, in the hopes of learning what he needs to know.

Ymaginatif also appears to be something of an Augustinian, in that he posits a family likeness between human intelligence and Christ which ignores the moral dimension: "Forthi I counseille thee for Cristes sake, clergie that thow lovye,/ For kynde wit is of his kyn and neighe cosynes bothe/ To Oure Lord, leve me – forthi love hem, I rede" (B xii 92-4). This recalls the third quotation from Augustine, about man's intellectual nature making it possible to become like the Word. In any case, it is an Augustinian kind of insight that the relationship between Christ, Clergie and Kynde Wit implies a Trinitarian commonality constituted by the intellect.

But it is all very different at the end of Will's encounter with Ymaginatif. Will asserts that, regardless of the presence of Christ's likeness in all, baptism is necessary: "Alle these clerkes," quod I tho, "that on Crist leven,/ Seyen in hire sermons that neither sarsens ne Jewes/ Ne no creature of Cristes liknesse withouten Cristendom worth saved" (274-6). Ymaginatif responds with hostility. He makes it clear that Baptism is irrelevant; Trajan "took nevere Cristendom". What made him Christ-like was his obedience to "his

lawe". Truth is in fact the image of God in him: "Ne wolde nevere trewe God but trewe truthe were allowed" (287). The insights of Lady Holi Chirche and Piers are thus repeated.

Waking up at the beginning of B xv, following the Haukyn episode, Will meets Anima, who introduces himself not only as *Anima*, who gives life to the body, but also as *Animus* (who "wilne and wolde"), *Mens*, *Memoria*, *Racio* and *Sensus.* The whole range of functions of the human mind, so fragmented hitherto, are here united and integrated. Only Conscience will function separately later in the poem. The quotation that follows (B xv 30a-e) is from Isidore of Seville, but perhaps there is an echo of Augustine's trinity of reason, memory and will as an analogy of the Holy Trinity and as the expression of the image of God in man.[19] If so, Langland is using Isidore to flout Augustine by listing five faculties. In any case, as we are seeing, for Langland the image of God is not about intellectual faculties. Surprisingly, no-one, even Robertson and Huppé, seems to have noticed that Bede repeats part of this quotation from Isidore, and is credited with it in the *Gloss* on Exodus 40: 16.[20]

But there is no triumphant intellectualism in Anima's speech. He rebukes Will for his intellectual ambitions, reminding him that Lucifer fell because of his ambition for knowledge and status:

[19] PL 42, 984.
[20] PL 113, 294.

"Ye, sire," I seide, "by so no man were greved,

Alle the sciences under sonne and alle the sotile craftes

I wolde I knewe and kouthe kyndely in myn herte!"

"Thanne artow inparfit," quod he, "and oon of Prides knyghtes!

For swich a lust and likyng Lucifer fel from hevene:

Ponam pedem meum in aquilone et similis ero Altissimo"[21] (47-51a).

It is significant that it is still "sciences" and "craftes" that Will demands to know "kyndely", not love. He still has not absorbed the teaching of Lady Holi Chirche. Perhaps Anima is so alarmed at the possibility of creatures imitating God that he strictly confines the image of God to mental faculties. As we saw in chapter five, he reminds Will that their desire to be like God, knowing good and evil, caused Adam and Eve to forfeit Paradise: "Coveitise to konne and knowe science/ Pulte out of Paradis Adam and Eve:/ *Sciencie appetitus hominem inmortalitatis gloriam spoliavit*"[22] (61-2a). That this was precisely Satan's intention can be seen in a C-text addition to the Harrowing of Hell (C xx 312-20), where he recalls the promise of equality with God made by the serpent in Genesis 3: 5 ("Scit enim Deus quod in quocumque die comederitis ex eo, aperientur oculi vestri, et eritis sicut dii, scientes bonum et malum"[23]): "And byhotest here and hym aftur to knowe/ As two godes, with god, bothe good and ille" (C xx 317-8). So Anima challenges the Augustinian view that the image of God is constituted by knowledge, this

[21] I shall place my foot in the north, and be like the Most High.
[22] The appetite for knowledge deprived mankind of the glory of immortality.
[23] For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

time specifically of good and evil. Far from bringing about equality with God, the pursuit of intellectual questions only causes alienation from him.

The C-text has warned of the dangers of desiring equality with God as early as Conscience's grammatical speech in Passus iii: "Indirect thyng is as ho-so coueytede/ Alle kyn kynde to knowe and to folowe/ And withoute cause to cache and come to bothe nombres" (362-4). "Indirectness" is therefore both rebellion against the limitations of human knowledge and morality, and a desire to possess the uniqueness of God, instead of the plurality of humanity. Covetousness is therefore more than greed for money and material possessions: "To coueyte/ To acorde in alle kynde and in alle kyn nombre" (370-1).

Being "rect", on the other hand, is defined as faithfulness and harmony with the Incarnate Christ in his humility: "And man is relatif rect, yf he be rihte trewe:/ He acordeth with Crist in kynde, *Verbum caro factum est*"[24] (354-5). So a right relationship with God means having Christ's nature, especially humility. Interestingly, in the *Wisdom* play, there is also an emphasis on man's likeness to God through the intellect (142-4) and the will (213-4). Lucifer appears as the gallant, Mynde, "the veray figure of the Deyte" (184), who claims to know God by reason (210).[25]

Will later in B xv asks Anima for another definition of charity. Anima answers:

[24] The Word was made flesh.
[25] Greg Walker, ed., *Medieval Drama: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 235-57.

"A childissh thing," he seide –/ "*Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum celorum* - [26]/ Withouten fauntelte or folie a fre liberal wille" (150-1).

Free will, like "myghte" and "trewthe", is another facet of the one nature shared by God and man, for as we shall see below, free will is identified with one of the persons of the Trinity. Will then unexpectedly brings up the image of the mirror again: "Clerkes me kenne me that Crist is in all places;/ Ac I seigh hym nevere sothly but as myself in a mirour:/ *Hic in enigmate, tunc facie ad faciem*"[27] (161-2a). The mirror discloses both the image of God and Will's true self; not his personal self, but himself as created in the image of God, "who he might be" in C. David Benson's words.[28] We are reminded of the other two mirrors in B xi, which failed to show Will his own true image and that of God, not that the first was ever intended to, and of Piers' words about the presence of Truthe sitting in the heart in B v 605-9. Will has discovered the true image of God in Christ within himself, and most importantly, its authenticity is guaranteed by his realisation of the true nature of charity, the "fre liberal wille". His passions are now under control; there is no overt reference to the *Gloss* on Romans 2: 14, but it seems clear that they can now contribute to a life of charity, far from Augustine's fearful dismissal of them.

Anima goes on to compare the image of God in man with the likeness of a ruler

[26] Unless you become as little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
[27] Here darkly, there face to face.
[28] *Public Piers Plowman: Modern Scholarship and Late Medieval Culture* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), p. 97.

on a coin. This is the starting-point of Margaret Goldsmith's book, and is also examined by Barbara Raw. Anima complains of the debasement of both clergy and laity by sin:

> As in lussheburwes is a luther alay, and yet loketh he lik a sterlyng:
> The merk of that monee is good, ac the metal is feble.
> And so it fareth by some folk now: thei han a fair speche,
> Crowne and Cristendom, the kynges mark of hevene,
> Ac the metal, that is mannes soule, [myd] synne is foule allayed:
> Both lettred and lewed beth allayed now with synne,
> That no life loveth oother, ne Oure Lord, as it semeth (348-354).

The C-text expands this, sharpening the contrast between the appearance of the coin and its inner reality:

> Me may now liken lettred men to a Loscheborw oþer worse
> And to a badde peny with a gode printe:
> Of moche mone þat is mad þe metal is nauhte
> And ȝut is the printe puyr trewe and parfitliche ygraue
> And so hit fareth by false cristene: here follynge is trewe,
> Cristendoem of holy kyrke, the kynges mark of heuene,
> Ac the metal, þat is mannes soule, of many of this techares
> Is alayed with leccherye and oþer lustes of synne,

> That god coueyteth nat þe coyne þat Crist hymsulue printede
> And for þe synne of þe soule forsaketh his oune coyne (xvii 72-81).

By the very nature of the coin image, "the kynges mark of heuene" clearly refers to the image of God. The idea can be found in biblical passages such as Psalm 4: 7 ("Leva super nos lucem vultus tui"[29]), Matthew 22: 15-22 (the Question of Tribute), Luke 15, 8-10 (the Parable of the Lost Coin) and Colossians 1: 15 ("qui est imago Dei invisibilis"[30]). Augustine writes in the *Gloss* on Psalm 4: 7:

> *Signatum est super nos lumen etc.* Hoc lumen est totum, et verum hominis bonum, quo signatur, ut denarius imagine regis. *Lumen.* Lumen, id est luminosus vultus et illuminans nos, imago qua cognosceris. (*The light is stamped upon us.* This light is the complete and true good of humanity, with which it is sealed like a denarius with the king's image. *Light.* The light, that is the face shining and enlightening us, the image by which you know us.) (PL 113, 849)

The image of God in human beings makes it possible for God to claim them as his own; it enables redemption. The laity is here only implicitly included, and, perhaps by default, excluded from the exegesis of later generations. Anima explicitly includes the laity, but in the C-text, the "techares" are Liberum Arbitrium's target.

[29] Lift up the light of your face on us. (Augustine is using a different Latin Psalter from the Vulgate.)
[30] Who is the image of the invisible God.

The *Gloss* on Colossians 1: 15 reads:

> *Qui est imago.* Aliter imago Regis est in nummo, aliter in filio. Nos sumus nummus, in quibus imago Dei Christus Filius. Nulla imago Dei debet coli, nisi illa quae, hoc est quod ipse, nec ipsa pro illo, sed cum illo. (*Who is the image*. In one respect, the image of the king is on the coin, in another in the Son. We are the coin, in whom is the image of God, Christ the Son. No image of God should be worshipped, except the one who is what he is himself, not the same as well as him, but with him.) (PL 114, 609-10)

No content is ascribed to the image of God; in this passage in *Piers Plowman*, too, Anima's emphasis is on the adulteration of the image, not its positive content.

So like Wit, Anima distances himself from Augustine, turning away from abstraction towards linking the image of God in man with charity. For all his intellectual nature, Anima teaches the limits of the intellect; the image of God is not about knowledge or equality with God, but about love. His – and Piers' - allegory of the Tree of Charity in B xvi is the climax of his message.

Perhaps Anima's change of name to Liberum Arbitrium in the C-text implies a movement away from the intellectual integration of Anima in the B-text to a new emphasis on the will, epitomising the moral aspect of personhood, instead of memory and reason, epitomising the intellectual. Liberum Arbitrium provides the only explicit use of

the term *ymago Dei,* the image of God, in any of the three main versions of the poem (C xviii 6). The *ymago Dei* is an "ympe", a cutting taken from a tree, presumably God himself. It is to be found in the "contre, *Cor-Hominis*", the heart of man (4); it grows by the grace of God, and is called "Trewe loue" (8); it produces the fruit of good works and charity. It will be recalled that, according to Lady Holi Chirche, the heart is where "kynde knowynge" and the human capacity for love are situated (B i 142-7, 163-8, C i 141-3, 159-62). The image of God is still present, regardless of the Fall.

The identification of the Holy Spirit with God's own free will, mirrored in human relationships, is made explicit by Abraham:

> Thus in thre persones is parfitliche pure manhede –
> That is, man and his make and mulliere hir children,
> And is noght but a gendre of a generacioun, before Jesus Crist in hevene;
> So is the Fader forth with the Sone and Fre Wille of bothe –
> *Spiritus procedens a Patre et Filio* - [31]
> Which is the Holy Goost of alle, and alle is but o God (B xvi 220-4).

The C-text version, assigned to Abraham's *alter ego*, Faith, is more elaborate and highly elliptical (xviii 201-20). God is first portrayed as an earthly lord, whose threefold nature reflects that of the Trinity. This is followed by the threefold divine procreation of patriarchs, prophets and apostles (207-10). God has made man in his own image:

[31] The Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son.

O god almyhty þat man made and wrouhte
Semblable to hymsulue ar eny synne were,
A thre he is þer he is and herof bereth wittnesse
The werkes þat hymsulue wrouhte and this worlde both:
Celi enarrant gloriam Dei[32] (211-214a).

The human family – father, mother, child – is also an image of the Trinity (215-20). Pearsall notes that the comparison originates with St Augustine who does not think it a good one.[33] Pearsall suggests that this is "apt to the limited understanding of Abraham", but alternatively it perhaps reflects Langland's self-distancing from Augustine.

Participation in the divine nature appears again in the speech of the Samaritan (B xvii 91-350). Before examining it in detail, a brief detour must be made to consider some references to Kynde and his role in the poem. As a pseudonym for God, Kynde comes to the fore after the tearing of the Pardon seems to render Trewthe unsatisfactory. In general, Kynde refers to the way God reveals himself in the world, sometimes in the process, as with "Trewthe", free will and "myghte", disclosing an affinity between himself and the human race. At these points, it is hard to resist the idea that there are overtones of "kynde" in its modern sense of sympathy and generosity. So by implication, if "unkyndnesse" undermines the loving activity of God, then, according to the Samaritan, kindness is a participation in the Holy Spirit's mercy and love, and thus the

[32] The heavens reveal the glory of God.
[33] 1994, p. 303, n. 215.

expression of the image of God in man:

> Thus is unkyndnesse the contrarie that quencheth, as it were,
> The grace of the Holy Goost, Goddes owene kynde.
> For that kynde dooth, unkynde fordooth – as thise corsede theves,
> Unkynde Cristene men, for coveitise and envye
> Sleeth a man for hise moebles, with mouth or with handes (271-5).

The grace of the Holy Spirit is God's own nature, but human unkindness is capable of quenching it. But human beings are also capable of participating in and co-operating with the gracious "kynde" of God. So far from the image of God being destroyed by sin, kindness is natural to man, even in his fallen state.

Piers is the supreme embodiment of the image of God in man, the embodiment of the fullest possibilities of human nature. According to Anima, like God, he sees infallibly what is in the human heart: "Ac Piers the Plowman parceyveth moore depper/ What is the wille, and wherfore that many wight suffreth:/ *Et vidit Deus cogitationes eorum*"[34] (B xv 199-200a). He has such insight because his will is perfectly aligned with God's, so much so that he is identified with Christ:

> Therfore by colour ne by clergie knowe shaltow hym nevere,
> Neither thorugh wordes ne werkes, but thorugh wil oone,

[34] And God saw their thoughts.

And that knoweth no clerk nor creature on erthe

But Piers the Plowman – *Petrus, id est Christus*[35] (209-12).

Once more, the image of God is moral, grounded in the will, not the intellect. David Aers denies that *id est* implies identification, arguing instead that Piers is no more than a lens through which the person of Christ is to be discerned.[36] This does not seem adequate; *id est*, as has been apparent so often in this study, routinely signifies an explanation or an interpretation, and can be translated in Middle English as "as much as to mene", or, in modern English, "in other words".

The C-text is still more intense on the deification of Piers: "By clothing ne by carpynge knowe shaltow hym neuere,/ Ac thorw werkes thow myghte wyte wher-for he walketh./ *Operibus credite*!" (xvi 338-9a). The B-text's explicit identification of Piers with Christ is abandoned, but an implicit identification remains, since the phrase, *operibus credite*, from John 10: 38, is spoken by Jesus with reference to his own works.

The identification continues in later passūs; Piers practices God's generous and undiscriminating love for the whole human race:

A[c] wel worthe Piers the Plowman, that pursueth God in doynge,

[35] Peter, that is Christ (omitted in the C-text).
[36] *Piers Plowman and Christian Allegory* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975), pp. 85-7.

Qui pluit super iustos et iniustos[37] at ones,

And sent the sonne to save a cursed mannes tilthe

As bright as to the beste man or to the beste woman.

Right so Piers the Plowman peyneth hym to tilye

As wel for a wastour and wenche of the stewes

As for himself and hise servauntes, save he is first yserved (B xix 434-40).

The Latin quotation in line 345 is from the Sermon on the Mount:

> Ego autem dico vobis: diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his qui oderunt vos: et orate pro persequentibus et calumniantibus vos: ut sitis filii patris vestri, qui in caelis est: qui solem suum oriri facit super bonos et malos: et pluit super justos et injustos. (But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.)[38]

The fact that this speech is placed on the lips of the "lewed vicory", the underminer of Prudence, does not in any way reduce its truth or force. So Piers shares in God's own nature, and imitates him in "doynge", reflecting the sending of the Son, even to the cursed, as well as the best, and by working even for "a wastour and a wenche of the stewes". Piers' status as God's "procuratour, reve and registrar" (B xix 260-1) is conferred on him by grace, along with the power to consecrate "Goddes body" (390-4).

[37] Who rains on the righteous and the unrighteous.
[38] Matthew 5: 43-end.

Goldsmith observes: “There is no break in the narrative to signal the final transformation of Piers; the transfer of power and godlikeness to mankind is explicit” (1981, p. 77).

By contrast, as for those who make the acquisition of knowledge their main aim, the friars learn nothing of real value; in the final passus, they are seen going to university prompted by Envy to learn “logyk and lawe, and ek contemplacion” (B xx 273-4), leaving Coveitise and Unkyndenesse to attack Conscience (295-7). They evade their pastoral responsibilities by devoting themselves to intellectual pursuits and fail to put their theoretical moral and spiritual purposes into practice. They thus tacitly ally themselves with Antichrist. Once again, the intellect, separated from charity, and pursued as a worldly end, leads man away from God and into sin. “Logyk and lawe”, as earlier, in B xi 218-22, are inferior to faith, which is “lele helpe”. B xx shows how little “lele helpe” the friars have to offer.

Intellectualism is no ordinary wrong turning; Langland implies that it represents a participation in the sins of Lucifer, Adam and Eve, and the friars. He seeks to correct it by identifying the image of God with charity, adumbrated in the teaching of Lady Holi Chirche, Repentaunce and Wit, and reaching its fulfilment in that of Anima. His motivation is ethical; he seeks ecclesiastical, political and personal reformation, to which the understanding of the image of God as something intellectual is an obstacle. On the other hand, if God is love, as Lady Holi Chirche describes him in B i 86, then his image in humanity will be constituted by love. The poem ends with the moral being seen as

superior to the intellectual, even as, in the narrative of the poem, the moral is overcome by the intellectual.

Does Langland use the *Gloss* to counter this intellectualism? It seems that in this instance, it is not a case of Langland appealing to the *Gloss* against Augustine; his argument is with Augustine as represented in the *Gloss*. It may be argued that the extracts from Augustine in the *Gloss* are taken out of context, though the theological omissions identified at the beginning of this chapter cannot always be remedied by reference to others of his writings. To take one example, the glossing of *faciamus* with reference to the Trinity, but without a doctrine of man, is paralleled in the *Confessions*.[39] It may be that Langland's access to Augustine was limited, or alternatively, that he takes excerpts that were readily available in the *Gloss* to set Augustine up as a theological straw man. As always, his tests are those of ethical productivity and social cohesion, and on these criteria the teaching of Augustine is found wanting. Too great a gulf is fixed between God and the everyday world, between a small spiritual elite and the great majority of people. Langland's alternative strategy is to emphasise the affinities, or potential affinities between God and man, the possibility of sharing the divine nature, not in respect of reason, but truth, "myghte", free will and "kynde". We can thus see in *Piers Plowman* a challenge to St Augustine's characteristically intellectual understanding of the image of God as represented in the extracts from the *Gloss*.

[39] PL 32, 858-9.

EIGHT

THE IMAGE OF MAN AND THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

Although the primary focus in the previous chapter was on the doctrine of the creation of man in *Piers Plowman*, it proved difficult to separate it from Langland's treatment of the Incarnation. Though the two doctrines are conceptually distinct, they are both grounded in Christological concerns; in other words, the Word is both God's agent in creation and becomes flesh at the Incarnation. He who is "the image of the invisible God", in the words of Colossians 1: 15, takes on the image of man. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how Langland explores the humanity of Christ, and uses it to reinforce the poem's ethical teaching and social vision. Once again, we shall examine how he scrutinizes the *Gloss* to see whether or not the Fathers' exposition of biblical teaching will support and authorize him. St Augustine will be less in evidence than in previous chapters, but reference will be made to some of Langland's contemporaries.

The traditional Christian understanding of how human beings are saved is through the initiative of God, who sent his Son into the world to live a human life, to die a human death and be raised from the dead. All human beings have to do is to receive what God has done for them. In *Piers Plowman*, this is the theology of the Harrowing of Hell in B xviii. But alongside this, there are indications in the Dobet passūs, and even in B xviii, of God playing a more passive role and human beings playing a more active one. In this, Langland runs the risk of being accused of Pelagianism, a live theological issue in the

fourteenth century, as we have seen. He shows himself acutely aware, like so many of his contemporaries, of the suffering of the Son of God and the love that led him to submit to human violence in order to overcome the pain and sin of humankind. However, Langland differs from his contemporaries in that the Incarnation seems as important to him, if not more so, than the Passion; that his depiction of the Passion is less gory than, say, Julian's; and that the Last Judgement features less in his thinking, especially in comparison with its salience in wall-paintings in church.

Much work has been done on this topic. Though part of this chapter is indebted to Daniel Murtaugh, he seems sometimes to miss the point by not fully taking into account the wider controversial background to Langland's understanding of the image of God. Another significant work is that of Ellen Ross.[1] She shows how the imagery of the pain of Christ's crucifixion in wall-paintings, drama, sermons, spiritual writings and manuscript illuminations was used to deepen awareness of the divine mercy, and to evoke a sense of compassion for the poor and the sick. Though she does not refer to *Piers Plowman*, the evidence she surveys reveals the extent to which Langland wrote in a context fully attuned to the implications of the Incarnation of Christ. C. David Benson covers similar ground.[2]

Two other doctrines are involved in Langland's treatment of the Incarnation. The

[1] *The Grief of God: Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[2] *Public Piers Plowman: Modern Scholarship and Late Medieval Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

first is the impassibility of God, his immunity from suffering and emotion (the two are often equated by the Fathers). As an explicit doctrine, divine impassibility became the Church's official teaching during the patristic period, and was reinforced by the renewed influence of Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius in the thirteenth century. This was in spite of any number of biblical texts indicating Christ's vulnerability, such as the narratives of the agony in the garden in the Synoptic Gospels, his grief at the death of Lazarus (John 11: 35-8) and the cry of dereliction on the cross ("Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?"[3]) (Matthew 27: 46; Mark 15: 34), all of which Langland quotes or alludes to. Others, however, such as Hosea 11: 8[4] and Hebrews 5: 8[5] play no role in *Piers Plowman*.

Divine impassibility raises two further issues. The first is the doctrine of the sinlessness of Christ, his freedom from both original and actual sin, and, though going beyond the Biblical evidence, even temptation. The other issue is the extent to which the Incarnate Christ retained the divine knowledge of the Second Person of the Trinity. This has to be reconciled with the self-emptying of which Philippians 2: 7 speaks ("sed semetipsum exinanavit, formam servi accipiens in similitudinem hominum factus est et habitu inventus ut homo"[6]). This self-emptying may be held to imply the restriction of the knowledge of Jesus to the horizons of a first-century Jew, who needed to learn, along with every other human being. His words in Mark 13: 32 ("de die autem illo vel hora

[3] My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
[4] Conversum est in me cor meum pariter conturbatur est paenitudo mea. (My heart is turned inside me, in the same way my repentance is stirred up).
[5] Et quidem cum esset Filius didicit ex his quae passus est oboedentiam. (And though indeed he was Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered).
[6] But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men, and was found in condition as man.

nemo scit neque angeli in caeli neque Filius nisi Pater"[7]) form a prominent proof-text for this restriction. In the *Gloss* on this verse, St Hilary (d. 368) writes:

> Filius et Spiritus Sanctus, quia non sunt a se, de die illa nesciunt a se: Pater autem, quia a se est, scit a se. (The Son and the Holy Spirit, because they do not exist of themselves, do not know about that day; but the Father, because he exists of himself, knows from himself.) (PL 114, 228)

There is no co-equality here; the incompleteness of Christ's knowledge is accepted, but as a feature of his divine nature shared with the Holy Spirit, not as a condition of his Incarnation.

The second doctrine involved in Langland's treatment of the Incarnation is that of the *communicatio idiomatum*, whereby what can be said of one of the two natures of Christ can be said of the other, to avoid calling into question the unity of the person of Christ. This doctrine was born out of the theological struggles in the fifth century between Catholics on one hand, and Nestorians and Eutychians on the other. Prominent examples of the *communicatio idiomatum* in Christian tradition are the ascription of the title *Theotokos*, God-bearer, to the Virgin Mary, and Luther's description of Jesus as "the Crucified God". The flow, as it were, in the *communicatio idiomatum* is mostly uni-directional, in other words, an application to the godhead of the attributes and experiences

[7] But of that day or hour, no-one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, only the Father.

of the human Jesus. On the rare occasions when the flow is in the other direction, the tendency is for the human nature of Jesus to be ignored in the interests of his divine impassibility.

Belief in divine impassibility seems to be the reason why the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* is not universally practiced when the Fathers expound Scripture passages concerning Christ's humanity. An example of this from the *Gloss* is St Jerome on Mark 14: 35 ("et orabat ut si fieri posset transiret ab eo hora"[8]):

> *Et orabat.* Hoc contra Eutychianos qui dicunt unam tantum in Christo operationem, unam voluntatem: hic autem ostendit humanam quae per infirmitatem carnis recusat passionem, et divinam quae prompta est perficere dispensationem. (*He prayed*. This against the Eutychians who say there is only one power at work, one will in Christ. He shows his human nature, which rebels against the passion through the weakness of the flesh, and the divine which is ready to fulfil its responsibility.) (PL 114, 231-2)

While the Bible undoubtedly authenticates a conflict between shrinking from the ordeal of the cross and acceptance of the Father's will within the personality of the Incarnate Christ, the struggle is not, *pace* Jerome, in fact between divine and human, but takes place within Christ's human nature alone. Jerome imperils the unity of Christ by setting the divine and human in conflict with each other.

[8] And he prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

While focusing on the compassion of Christ in the *Gloss* on Matthew 26: 37, Jerome explains away Jesus' human feelings:

> *Coepit contristari* ut veritatem assumpti hominis probaret. Vere contristatus est, sed non passio ejus animo dominatur: verum propassio est, unde ait: *Coepit contristari*. Contristatur autem non timore patiendi, qui ad hoc venerat, sed propter infelicem Judam et scandalum apostolorum et ejectionem Judaeorum et eversionem Jerusalem. (*He began to be sorrowful* so as to prove the truth of the human nature he had taken. He was truly sorrowful, but his feeling did not rule over his soul; in reality, it is a feeling for others; whence it is said, *he began to be sorrowful*. He who was coming to this was not sorrowful with fear of suffering, but because of unfaithful Judas, the stumbling of the apostles, the rejection of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem.) (PL 114, 169-70)

While not denying Christ's sorrow, Jerome is at pains to assert that it was not out of fear for himself, but out of compassion for others. An anonymous glossator immediately adds, in a firmly orthodox interpretation:

> Christus timet, quia ut Deus in corpore constitutus, fragilitatem carnis exponit; qui corpus suscepit omnia debuit subire quae corporis sunt. (Christ was afraid, because, as God established in a body, he reveals the frailty of the flesh; he who took on a body had to undergo everything that belongs to the body.) (PL 114, 170)

Augustine handles the conflict very differently by, in effect, eliminating it. In the *Gloss* on Psalm 70: 11, he quotes the opening verse of Psalm 21:

> *Deus, dereliquit eum.* Unde alibi: *Quare me dereliquisti?* Id est, quare me derelictum putant malo suo? (*God has forsaken him.* Whence elsewhere: *Why have you forsaken me*? That is, why do they in their sinfulness think I have been forsaken?) (PL 113, 952)

This reads like an explaining away of the cry of dereliction; according to Augustine, it is not that Jesus feels forsaken, but his human enemies who think he has been forsaken. Augustine seems uncomfortable with this manifestation of Christ's human weakness, as if it threatens divine impassibility; the flow of the *communicatio idiomatum* seems here to be from the godhead to the humanity, in order to impute impassibility to the crucified Christ. Given Augustine's intellectualisation of the image of God in man, and his low estimate of post-lapsarian human nature, he is unlikely to be receptive to the normal understanding of the fullness of Christ's humanity.

The grave danger when divine impassibility preponderates over the humanity of Christ is the heresy of Docetism, the belief that the humanity of Christ was simply an appearance. This was attractive to some who considered it impossible that the purity of the divine should be sullied by contact with matter. It was believed that if God really had taken human nature, his impassibility would have been compromised. But as was

perceived by St Irenaeus (d. 200), Docetism undermines the redemption.[9] In other words, if Jesus was not a real man, he would have lacked real oneness with the human race, and so the salvation he won would be at best only partial.

Even the *Gloss* itself does not escape the danger of Docetism, as for instance the anonymous gloss on 2 Corinthians 8: 9 ("Scitis enim gratiam Domini Iesu Christi quoniam propter vos egenus factus est cum esset dives ut illius inopia vos divites essetis"[10]):

> *Egenus factus est*. Non ait pauper factus est, cum dives fuisset; sed *cum dives esset* paupertatem enim assumpsit, et divitias non amisit; intus dives, foris pauper; latens deus in divitiis; apparens homo in paupertate. (*He was made poor*. He does not say he was made a poor man, though he had been rich; but *though he was rich*, he took on poverty and did not abandon his wealth. Inwardly God, outwardly a poor man; God hiding in riches, man appearing in poverty.) (PL 114, 562)

The problem lies in the second part of this extract; the manhood of Christ is presented as purely external, masking the Godhead, with the result that the inner aspects of his humanity are undermined. The testimony of the *Gloss* is thus uncertain. In some excerpts, the vulnerability of Christ is fully maintained, in that he is admitted to have felt fear in

[9] Kelly, J. N. D., *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1965), p. 147.
[10] For you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who, though he was rich, for your sakes became poor, so that by his poverty you might be rich.

Gethsemane; in others, there are unconvincing efforts to explain away the signs of his humanity in order to ensure that his divinity is not compromised.

In the fourteenth century, the dichotomy between divine impassibility and the vulnerability of Christ was a significant issue. For some, a renewed interest in Pseudo-Dionysius bore fruit in a vernacular theology of human unknowing which implies an extreme version of divine impassibility. One passage in the English translation of Pseudo-Dionysius made by the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* speaks of God having no attributes, not even "godhead ne goodness".[11] This makes one wonder what a God who neither keeps silence nor speaks has to do with the biblical God; indeed how a human being can know sufficient about him, or even of his very existence, to be able to write a book about him. As we shall see in the next chapter, this unknowing is diametrically opposed to Langland's understanding of God. In broad terms, it seems that devotional works emanating from a clerical and scholarly milieu, such as *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* are silent on the *communicatio idiomatum*.

But others at that time found the concept of the *communicatio idiomatum* attractive, partly for devotional reasons, partly, as we shall see, for social and political ones. An obvious example of the devotional is Julian of Norwich's vision of the servant. She identifies the servant with Adam and Everyman: "For in the syte of God al man is on

[11] *Deonise Hid Divinite and other Treatises on Contemplative Prayer,* ed. by P. Hodgson (London: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1955), p. 10.

man and on man is al man".[12] The servant's will is still sound after his fall, though he is unable to perceive that it is so. He wears a coat that is "old and al defaced, died with swete of his body, streyte fitting to hym and short, as it were a handful benethe the knee, bar, semand as if it shuld sone be weryd up, redy to be raggid and rent".[13] Then he is revealed as God the Son; the Sonship of the Incarnate Christ is his divine nature, his servanthood his human nature, exemplified by his poor clothes. God's Son fell[14] (compare B i 153). Contrary to Hilary, the Son knows when the Father's will is to be accomplished, because he is the wisdom of God; but in his ignorant human nature, he asks when. This is a balanced Christology; distinct capacities are attributed to the two natures, without setting them in conflict with each other or prejudicing the unity of the person of Christ. Though, as we saw in chapter five, Julian reduces the Fall to the status of an unfortunate accident, she reveals the compassion of the Father, who sits, not remotely in the glory of heaven, but "on the erth barren and desert, alone in the wildernes".[15] Thus, through an extension of the *communicatio idiomatum*, even the Father implicitly undergoes temptation, forgoing his impassibility. The glorified Christ is himself impassible, yet not fully while his members suffer: "For anenst that Criste is our hede, he is glorifyed and onpassible, and anenst his body in which al his members be knit, he is not yet ful gloryfyed ne al onpassible".[16]

Langland's affinities are with Julian's identification of the human nature of Christ

[12] *Julian of Norwich: A Revelation of Love,* ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1993), p. 75.
[13] Ibid. p. 76.
[14] Ibid. p. 78.
[15] Ibid. p. 75.
[16] Ibid. p. 43.

with sinful humanity. The *communicatio idiomatum* is significant to him; on many occasions, such as B i 46 and xix 110, he substitutes God for Jesus. Such substitutions are surprisingly ambivalent. On one hand, they can highlight the enormity of human sin, not only of those directly responsible for the crucifixion, but of all humankind. *The Dream of the Rood* contains a number of examples of this, such as: "Geseah ic weruda God/ Þearle þenian (51-2).[17] There is no ambivalence here, for the poem's focalisation through the first-person narrator and the Rood itself prescribes an emotional response of shock and outrage in the hearer/reader. On the other hand, the substitution can result in a perverse kind of Docetism, as if minimising the human suffering of Christ in favour of his strength and courage, as also in *The Dream of the Rood*, where the heroism of Christ is foregrounded much more than his suffering. As we shall see, this is a danger in the *Christus Victor* trope; other dangers will emerge in the Harrowing of Hell passus.

Langland's understanding of the Incarnation is orthodox in that he commits himself to the full humanity of Christ, but he intensifies his presentation of it to the edge of orthodoxy, including calling divine impassibility into question. Perhaps his comparatively mild doctrine of original sin makes it possible for him to venture this risk,

[17] I saw the God of hosts cruelly stretched out (ed. by Michael Swanton. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970, p. 95).

since, even for the impeccably orthodox, to make the Incarnation possible, the image of God must continue to exist in all humanity, regardless of original sin. Otherwise, God and humanity would have nothing in common to enable the Second Person of the Trinity to take human nature.

The first instance of Langland's intensified understanding of the humanity of Christ occurs in the sermon of Repentaunce, examined in the previous chapter:

> For thorugh that synne Thi sone was sent to this erthe
> And bicam man of a maide mankynde to save –
> And madest Thiself with Thi Sone us synfulle yliche:
> *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram;*[18]
> *Qui manet in caritate, manet in Deo, et Deus in eo*[19] (B v 485-7b).

The application of the quotation from Genesis 1: 26 to the intention of God to make human beings like himself is clear. But in the preceding lines, we are presented with a movement in the other direction, God making himself through his Son like sinful mankind, as it were in the Incarnation creating himself in the image of man. The divine adoption of the image of man recurs elsewhere in the poem, as we shall see. Interestingly, "synfulle" qualifies "us", but there is a suggestion that it also refers to Christ; not that his likeness to us means that he sins, but nevertheless, because of living amongst sinful

[18] Let us make man in our own image and likeness.
[19] He who lives in love, lives in God, and God in him.

people, he is vulnerable to the risk of being tainted by exposure to other people's sins. The same vulnerability recurs in B xviii, where the devil admits to having "assailed him with synne" (296). This may mean simply temptation, as the following lines suggest; or maybe the sinful words and actions of others, such as the mocking priests at Calvary (Matthew 27: 39-43; B xviii 54-6, C xx 55-7). The phrase "us synfulle yliche" is omitted from the C-text, doubtless because it could be easily construed as contrary to the orthodox belief in Christ's sinlessness.

In the C-text, Repentaunce's quotation from I John also appears in the ingenious grammatical speech of Conscience where the link between the Incarnation and the image of God in man is made explicit:

> And suffer harde penaunces
> For þat lordes loue that for oure loue deyede
> And coueytede oure kynde and be kald in oure name
> *Deus homo*,
> And nyme hym into oure noumbre now and eueremore.
> *Qui manet in caritate manet in deo et deus in eo* (C iii 399 - 402a).

The phrase "coueytede oure kynde" expresses not only God's passionate desire for the human race, but his desire to share our human nature through the Incarnation. Conscience thus dissociates himself from the denial of emotion in God, implicit in divine impassibility, using the word "couetyde", which implies almost everywhere else in the

poem something wholly sinful. But this is different, in that the purpose of God's covetousness is not self-seeking, but to reconcile the human race to God the Trinity, as an adjective agrees with its noun:

> Thus is he man, and mankynde in maner of sustantyf
> As *hic et hec homo*[20] asking an adiectyf
> Of thre trewe termisones, *trinitas unus deus;*
> *Nominativo, pater et filius et spiritus sanctus*[21] (403-5a).

Interestingly, in indicating the two genders of the human being, Langland is ignoring Augustine's spiritualisation of gender differences, as in the fourth extract in the previous chapter.

Returning to the B-text, we find Repentaunce reverting to Docetism: "Siththe with Thi selve sone in our sute deadest/ On Good Fryday for mannes sake at ful tyme of the day" (B v 488-9). Whether "sute" is glossed as "guise" [22] or "clothing" (as in *Confessio Amantis* 4: 27, with overtones of "livery"[23]), the result is less than orthodox. The humanity of Christ is external, an appearance only.

The C-text is orthodox at this point:

[20] This (male and female) human being.
[21] The Trinity, one God, in the nominative, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
[22] Schmidt, 1995, p. 87.
[23] *The Complete Works of John Gower: the English Works*, ed. by G. C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), vol. 2, p. 302.

For thorw þat synne thy sone ysent was til erthe

And bicam man of a mayde, mankynde to amende

And madest thysulue, with thy sone, our soule and our body ilyche:

Ego in patre, et Pater in me; et qui me videt, videt patrem meum,[24]

And sethe in our secte, as hit semed, deyedest

On a Friday, in fourme of a man, feledest our sorwe (vii 127-31).

Though we seem to have Docetism in the phrase "as hit semed", nevertheless, in lines 129 and 131, there is a full-blooded understanding of the Incarnation, in which Christ's likeness to humanity in body and soul, and his suffering are real. Yet only the humanity suffers; there is no *communicatio idiomatum.*

A few lines later in the B-version of Repentaunce's sermon comes an unexpected reaffirmation of impassibility, in terms which the Jerome of the *Gloss* on Matthew 26: 37 would have easily found acceptable: "Ther Thiself ne Thi sone no sorwe in deeth feledest,/ But in our secte was that sorwe, and this one it ladde:/ *Captivam duxit captivitatem*" (v 490-1a). Repentaunce's point is that the Godhead not only does not die, but does not even feel sorrow, which is experienced by "our secte" only. *Captivitatem* seems to refer to "secte", rather than "sorwe", which is in line with the anonymous *Gloss* on Ephesians 4: 8 ("Ascendens in altum captivam duxit captivitatem"[25]):

[24] I am in the Father and the Father is in me; and he who has seen me has seen my father.
[25] Ascending on high, he led captivity captive.

> *Captivam duxit captivitatem.* Id est eos quos diabolus captivaverat a paradiso, et proprios mundi et inferi fecerat, iterum captivos fecit Christus, dum ad coelum reducuntur. (*He has led captivity captive*. That is those whom the devil captured from paradise and made them belong to the earth and hell; whom again Christ made captive when they were led back to heaven.) (PL 114, 594)

We seem here to be anticipating the devil's theft of Piers' fruit in B xvi, and the Harrowing of Hell in B xviii.

The word "sute" again occasions confusion in B v 497: "the thridde day [ther]after Thow yedest in oure sute". Schmidt glosses "sute" as "form", but the MED gives no warrant for this. Perhaps this is why the C-text substitutes "sekte" (C vii 137), although Pearsall glosses "secte" as "suit of clothes".[26] The MED gives "class, sort or kind" as one meaning of "sekte" (for example, in B xi 237 and xiv 258); and "likeness, bodily form" as another (B v 498, C v 487 and C vii 137).

More Docetic ambiguity follows: "Of thyne doughtiest dedes were doon in oure armes" (501). Though "armes" means metaphorically "behalf", the implication is that Christ's humanity is external, as if he only temporarily borrowed what was not his. By quoting John 1: 14 ("Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis"[27]) in line 501a, however, Repentaunce rescues himself from Docetism; the Incarnation, through which

[26] 1994, p. 135.
[27] The Word was made flesh and lived among us.

Christ dwells "in us", is the grounds for our prayer for mercy, for he is "oure Fader and oure brother" (504).

The second instance of Langland's intensification of the humanity of Christ, though the emphasis is more on the Virgin Mary than on Jesus, occurs in the words of Piers at the end of B v:

> Mercy is a maiden there, hath myght over hem alle,
> And she is sib to alle synfulle, and hire sone also,
> And thorugh the help of hem two – hope thow noon oother -
> Thow myght gete grace there – so thow go bityme (635-8).

The implication is the same as in line 487; Mary, though doubtless without sin, even in the absence of an explicit reference to her Immaculate Conception, still shares the same family likeness as sinners. Thereby both are able to mediate God's grace to humanity.

Repentaunce's theme of God in Christ taking on the likeness of sinful humanity is taken up and intensified by Trajan who, describes Christ as taking on the likeness of the poor, with the specific purpose of eliciting a charitable response from the rest of society:

> For oure joy and oure [ju]ele, Jesu Crist of hevene,
> In a povere mannes apparaille pursueth us evere,
> And loketh on us in hir liknesse and that with lovely chere,

To knowen us by oure kynde herte and castynge of oure eighen,
Wheither we love the lordes here before oure Lord of blisse (B xi 184-8).

So Christ, though "of hevene", is not just the Second Person of the Trinity; as he lived in his incarnate life on earth, he is even today to be met in the likeness of the poor. The vulnerability and humility of his incarnate life continues in the contemporary world, where he learns by direct experience what human beings are really like. One is reminded of Blake's identification of the image of God with the image of man in "To Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love". Though this may seem theologically radical, it nevertheless is but a heightening of the orthodox understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* and opens it to the whole human race, ultimately including everyone in "blisse". At the same time, there is a sense of judgement ("to knowen us by oure kynde herte and casting of oure eighen"). By using the first person plural and the present tense, Langland inscribes himself and the poem's audience into these lines, giving a sense of the whole contemporary Christian community being as much the focus of Christ's attention as the poor.

Whoever is the speaker in the passage that follows, there is much more along the same lines:

For alle are we Cristes creatures, and of his cofres riche,
And bretheren as of oo blood, as wel beggares as erles.
For at Calvarie, of Cristes blood Cristendom gan sprynge,

And blody bretheren we bicome there, of o body ywonne,

As *quasi modo geniti*[28] gentil men echonne -

Ne beggere ne boye amonges us but if it synne made:

Qui facit peccatum servus est peccati.[29]

In the olde lawe, as the letter telleth, "mennes sones" men called us,

Of Adames issue and Eve ay til God-Man deide;

And after his resurexcion *Redemptor* was his name,

And we hise bretheren thorugh hym ybought, bothe riche and povere (198 - 207).

The phrase "blody bretheren" is first used by Piers in B vi 207; just as here, it expresses his sense of a common humanity through the redemption, which should give rise to compassion, even for the "wastours". Notwithstanding man's origin as "Cristes creatures", it is the death of the God-man which redeems the human race and makes humanity his brothers, in the process appearing to undermine human social distinctions. In practice, however, the worst effects of social hierarchy are only ameliorated by the exercise of compassion; the hierarchy itself remains intact.

Another image of the family relationship between Christ and the Christian here is that of the motherhood of Christ. Humanity has already been described as Christ's brothers (198-9); in lines 201-2, he is described as giving birth to his people, making them as new-born babies. The idea has already occurred to Will, perhaps significantly,

[28] As new-born babies.
[29] He who commits sin is the slave of sin.

when he is most in need of motherly comfort, as Scripture's sermon fills him with "tene" and "were":

> For Crist cleped us alle, come if we wolde -
> Sarsens and scismatikes, and so he dide the Jewes:
> *O vos omnes sicientes, venite*…[30]
> And bad hem souke for synne save at his breste
> And drynke boote for bale, brouke it whoso myghte (B xi 119-22).

The image originates with the Vulgate text of Canticles 1: 1 ("Osculetur me osculo oris sui: quia meliora sunt ubera tua vino"[31]) and is applied to Christ by St Bernard.[32] Even Julian treats the motherhood of Christ as a contrastive comparison, and presents the feeding as solely eucharistic: "The moder may geven hir child soken hir milke, but our pretious moder Iesu, he may feden us with himselfe".[33] Langland's subversion of gender boundaries suggests that his understanding of the Incarnation is not restricted to the taking of male human nature. The use of masculine and feminine demonstratives in C iii 404, noted above, makes this explicit.

But to recognise Christ is difficult, not least because of his preference for the clothing of the poor:

[30] All you who are thirsty, come…
[31] Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth, for your breasts are better than wine.
[32] PL 183, 816.
[33] Glasscoe, p. 98.

Why I meve this matere is moost for the povere –

For in hir liknesse Oure Lord ofte hath ben yknowe.

Witnesse in the Paske wyke whan he yede to Emaus –

Cleophas ne knew hym noght, that he Crist were,

For his povere apparaille and pilgrymes wedes,

Til he blessede and brak the breed that thei eten.

So bi his werkes thei wisten that he was Jesus,

Ac by clothing thei knewe hym noght, ne by carpynge of tonge.

…….

And in the apparaille of povere man and pilgrymes liknesse

Many tyme God hath ben met among nedy people,

Ther nevere segge hym seigh in secte of the riche (230-7, 241-3).

It is clear that in this passage "apparaille" is to be taken literally, to refer to the actual clothes of Christ, not, as in B v 488-9, to his humanity. Unlike Julian's parable of the servant, the effect of this is to foreground the poor, not the poverty of all humanity. The doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* is also in evidence in line 242; the incarnation of Christ creates an identity between God and the poor, with the result that the experience of the Incarnate Christ is also that of the full Godhead.

There does not, in this part of the poem, seem to be any advocacy of the practice of the imitation of Christ by all; people are not enjoined to imitate Christ by showing compassion for the poor. The poor imitate Christ perforce; but only kings seem to be

called to imitate Christ voluntarily. What Ellen Ross says of the media she investigates applies just as well to *Piers Plowman:* "In the late medieval English context, devotion to the suffering Jesus did not inculcate an individualistic private piety…The believers' alliance of compassion with Jesus enabled them to perceive Jesus in other humans."[34] Langland is also at one with his contemporaries in his conservatism. As Ross adds:

> [T]he figure of the suffering Jesus functioned to promote a conservative and ecclesiastically based social cohesion (in part through the association of Christ with the sacramental system and with the wider system of good works.)…The suffering Jesus functioned to inculcate common social practices such as confession and works of mercy (feeding the hungry and providing shelter for the poor), practices which contributed to the cohesion of medieval society.

As to the conservative form of social cohesion which Ross describes, we must accept that throughout the poem, with only uncertain exceptions, Langland sedulously upholds the social order, condemning those who try to escape their lowly status (B xi 127-36), and attempting to model correct royal and knightly behaviour, as in the banishment of Lady Mede and the protecting role of the knight in the half-acre. So one questions whether Will is as naïve as he seems when he equates "dowel" and "dobet" with "*Dominus* and knyghthode" in B x 330. Whatever strictures Langland may utter against the behaviour of some kings, or some lords, for example, through Dame Studie in B x 92-117, his targets are not all kings or all lords. Bad behaviour is not inherent in kingship or lordship; for

[34] 1997, p. 7.

none of the kings, knights or lords in *Piers Plowman* is a personification. Empirical kings and lords have a moral choice between fulfilling their duty of care, modelling themselves on Christ, or exploiting their social inferiors. Langland is emphatically not attacking kingship as such. In view of the kingly status of Christ in B xviii, it seems strange that he makes no explicit allusion to the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25: 31-46), with its description of the Son of Man as king, although it may be implied in B xi 242 and lies behind the Pardon in B vii 110a-b.

By contrast with Trajan, Ymaginatif, in speaking of the Incarnation in a passage discussed in chapter three, glosses over the identification between God and the poor exemplified in the birth of Jesus in a stable: "Ne in none beggers cote was that barn born,/ But in a burgeis place, of Bethlem the beste:/ *Set non erat locus in diversorio – et pauper non habet diversorium*"[35] (B xii 146-50). Here God remains at a distance from human suffering, specifically destitution. In view of this, it seems strange that Ymaginatif should here dissent from Reson, on whose behalf he has berated Will at the end of B xi. Reson, not the only character to accuse Will of something he has not said, insists on the value of suffering (375-81), on the grounds that God has chosen to suffer, rather than fix by some powerful intervention "al that mysstandeth"; he does so for human benefit, although Reson limits it to "some".

The themes of Repentaunce and Trajan are taken up later in the poem. In the incarnate life of his Word, the Trinitarian God abandons the glory of heaven (one might

[35] But there was no room in the inn – and a poor person does not own an inn.

add his invulnerability and divine impassibility). Through the *communicatio idiomatum*, he undergoes human experience and acquires sympathy for the needs of humanity, accepting the limitations of a time-bound earthly existence. Abraham says:

> So God, that gynnyng hadde nevere, but tho hym good thoughte,
> Sente forth his sone as for servaunt that time,
> To ocupien hym here til issue were spronge -
> That is, children of charite, and Holi Chirche the moder.
> Patriarkes and prophetes and apostles were the children,
> And Crist and Cristendom and alle Cristene Holy Chirche
> In menying that man moste on o God bileve,
> And there hym likede and lovede, and in thre [leodes] hym shewede (B xvi 194-201).

The *communicatio idiomatum* here not only embraces the divine nature of Christ, but extends to all the Trinity as well. God seems to feel a need to grasp the full extent of his own "wele" by experiencing its opposite, and specifically widowhood and death. Abraham/ Faith tells Will:

> Might is in matrimoyne, that multiplieth the erthe,
> And bitokeneth trewely, telle if I dorste,
> He that first formed al, the Fader of hevene.
> The Sone, if I dorste seye, resembleth wel the widwe:

Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?[36]

That is, creatour wexe creature to knowe what was bothe (211-5).

Langland, unlike Augustine in the extract quoted earlier, is clearly not explaining away the forsakenness of the Incarnate Christ. His God is not content with an abstract omniscience, still less with being merely thought to have been forsaken; he chooses to experience the human condition at first hand, not in some Docetic disguise, but in a fully creaturely existence, including a real experience of forsakenness. He becomes fully a creature.

So we come to the Harrowing of Hell in B xviii. Though God allowed Adam to sin, his response is not wrath and damnation, but the Incarnation, whose importance in this passus is underlined by the role Langland allots to the four daughters of God from Psalm 84, though not there called daughters of God, and not protagonists in a debate. One possible interpretation of their presence here is that it arises from the liturgical use of the psalm during Advent and Christmas.

The intrinsic triumphalism of the Harrowing of Hell, based as it is on the *Christus Victor* trope, is shot through with indications of the humility and compassion of Christ. Jesus jousts in Piers' armour, human nature. Having come to resemble Christ (B xviii 10), Piers is about to be identified with him:

[36] My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

"Is Piers in this place?" quod I, and he {sc. Faith} preynted on me.

"This Jesus of his gentries wol juste in Piers armes,

In his helm and in his haubergeon, *humana natura.*

That Crist be noght biknowe here for *consummatus Deus*,[37]

In Piers paltok the Plowman this prikere shal ryde

For no dynt shal hym dere as *in deitate Patris*"[38] (21-6).

Daniel Murtaugh comments: "This is an intensely paradoxical passage, for in this special kind of joust, where Christ's death will be His victory, human vulnerability must act as a shield to protect divine invulnerability".[39] At the same time, Langland preserves the impassibility of God by making Jesus' divine nature immune from blows. The same paradox underlies B xix 5-14, where it may seem at first that Jesus has not really identified himself with Piers, that Piers is an actor in a mystery play, only "peynted" with blood. But Conscience resolves this doubt by kneeling and confessing the reality of Christ. Murtaugh comments: "If the dreamer's search has been for the image of God in himself, we can almost say that in Piers, we have evidence of God's search for the image of man" (p. 122). In view of the above, the word "almost" is redundant.

In the debate between the four daughters of God, Pees introduces the theme of God experiencing the human condition:

[37] The fullness of God.
[38] In the Godhead (he shares with) the Father.
[39] *The Image of God in Piers Plowman* (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 1978), p. 122.

Sholde nevere right riche man that lyveth in reste and ese
Wite what wo is, ne were the deeth of kynde.
So God that bigan al of his goode wille
Bicam man of a mayde mankynde to save,
And suffrede to be sold, to se the sorwe of deying (B xviii 209-13).

This is intensified in the C-text: "Ne hadde god ysoffred of some oþer than hymsulue,/ He hadde nat wist witterly where deth were soure or swete" (C xx 217-8). "Suffrede" in the B-text has the now-archaic sense of "allowed"; in the C-text, it has its modern meaning and refers to the Passion itself, as opposed to the selling of Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Without the Passion, God would have no comprehension of death, even whether it is "soure or swete". So once again, through the *communicatio idiomatum*, the experience of the incarnate Christ is that of the Godhead as a whole. The Incarnation was therefore a compassionate decision of God, whereby, abandoning his impassibility, he came to suffer alongside humanity and share its sorrow. Pees continues:

Forthi God, of his goodnesse, the firste gome Adam,
Sette hym in solace and in sovereyn murthe
And sithhe he suffred hym synne, sorwe to feele -
To wite what wele was, kyndeliche to knowe it.
And after, God auntrede himself and took Adames kynde
To wit what he hath suffred in thre sondry places,
Bothe in hevene and erthe – and now til helle he thenketh

To wite what alle wo is, that woot of alle joye (217-224).

So Adam's sin is not attributable to God; God only permitted it in order to gain for himself direct knowledge of suffering. He takes "Adames kynde", sinful human nature, to share the totality of human suffering, even that of "helle". As Mary Davlin has observed, "Kynde knowyng is not only man's goal; it is God's as well".[40] God, in other words, decides it is necessary for him to learn at first-hand what it is like to experience the human condition, "wo", as well as "joye". Taking human nature thus serves an educative function for God, as if his experience can be widened like a human being's. This is perhaps not strictly divine passibility, but it certainly seems to be a sign of lack, if not actual incompleteness in God. This has the effect of raising humanity from the denigration implied in the Augustinian understanding of original sin. As Elaine Scarry writes, "human sentience is deeply legitimized by its having become God's sentience as well."[41]

Perhaps this throws light on two earlier strange passages in Will's narration in B xvi, which might suggest that Piers at this stage in the poem personifies human nature. The first comes in his response to the devil's theft of the fruit:

And Piers, for pure tene, that a pil he laughte,

And hitte after hym, happe how it myghte,

[40] '"Kynde Knowyng" as a Major Theme in *Piers Plowman* B', *RES*, n.s. 22 (1971), 13.
[41] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain; the Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and Oxford: OUP 1985), p. 217.

Filius by the faderes wille and frenesse of *Spiritus Sancti*

To go robbe that rageman and reve the fruyt fro hym (86-9).

Piers' "tene" at the devil's seizing of the fruit, who have now become the prophets and patriarchs and St John the Baptist, somehow precipitates the Incarnation, though this is not stated as an explicit consequence. The identification of the "pil" is also unclear; two earlier "pils" are identified with the *Potencia-Dei-Patris,* God the Father, and the *Sapiencia-Dei-Patris*, God the Son, whom Piers uses to strike down the world and the flesh (B xvi 30 and 36). The third is used by Liberum Arbitrium, according to Piers, to strike down the devil (50-2). What is unclear in 86-9 is how the "pil" can refer to both the Son and the Holy Spirit, and how the human Piers can be described as the rescuer of the "fruyt". But with line 90 ("And thanne spak *Spiritus Sanctus* in Gabrielis mouthe"), the theology returns to clear orthodoxy. Perhaps in these lines, Piers, as personified human nature, protests against the devil's usurpations and calls on the power and wisdom of God, as well as his own free-will. If so, this would suggest that salvation is God's response to human objections to being appropriated by the devil, the mere utterance of which indicate that original sin has not completely effaced the image of God in man. This is different from Julian's servant who is unable to perceive that his own will is still sound. This synergistic model of salvation is, needless to say, far removed from Augustinianism, though it owes something to Philippians 2: 12-3 ("cum metu et tremore vestram salutem operamini. Deus est enim qui operatur in vobis velle et perficere pro bona voluntate"[42]).

[42] With fear and trembling, work out your own salvation, for it is God who is at work in you to will and to work for his good pleasure.

The corresponding passage in the C-text is more explicit, and less open to charges of unorthodoxy and speculation. As speaker, Piers is replaced by Liberum Arbitrium, who says: "And thanne palle y adoune the pouke with the thridde shoriere,/ The which is *Spiritus Sanctus* and sothefaste bileue,/ And that is grace of þe Holy Gost; and thus gete y the maystrye" (xviii 50-2). But in spite of this, later, it is Libera-Voluntas-Dei who takes the "myddel shoriare", presumably the Second Person of the Trinity, to strike the devil: "Thenne moued hym moed *in magestate dei*,/ That *Libera-Voluntas-Dei* lauhte þe myddel shoriare,/ And hit aftur þe fende, happe how hit myghte" (118-20). The Incarnation then follows; but here it is Christ, not Piers, who retrieves the apples stolen by the devil: "*Filius* by þe Fadres wille, fley with *Spiritus Sanctus/* To go ransake þat rageman and reue hym of his apples" (121-2). The effect of these changes is to eliminate the role played by a solely human being, and to restore the initiative in human redemption to God.

The question of the human knowledge of the Incarnate Christ is raised a little earlier, with significant differences between the B- and the C-texts:

> And in the wombe of that wenche was he fourty woukes,
> Til he weex a faunt thorugh hir flesh, and of fightyng kouthe,
> To have yfoughte with the fend er ful tyme come.
> And Piers the Plowman parceyved plener tyme,
> And lered hym lechecraft, his lif for to save,

That though he were wounded with his enemy, to warisshen hymselve;
And dide hym assaie his surgerie on hem that sike were,
Til he was parfit praktisour, if any peril fille;
And soughte out the ske and synfulle, bothe blynde and crokede,
And commune women convertede and to goode turned:
Non est sanis opus medicus, set male habentibus…[43] (B xvi 100-10a).

These notions, that Christ learned how to fight in the womb of Mary, was ready at birth to fight with the devil, and had to be restrained from engaging in conflict with the devil before reaching adulthood, are bizarre ones. Perhaps this aggression is an instance of his exposure to sin. At the very least, he does not demonstrate the virtue of patience. However, David Aers suggests that it is timing that Piers teaches Christ, in other words submission to the constraints of human life until he has acquired the maturity gained by waiting for the fullness of time.[44] This waiting is necessary if God is to accept the reality of being human; but the understanding of the Incarnation it implies is so radical as to include God's need to accept and learn from dependence on human beings.

Piers' ability to teach Christ "lechecraft", as well as the constraints of being human, suggests his participation in divine knowledge, as in B xv 199-200a, but it also accords with the limitations of Christ's human knowledge implied in his self-emptying, referred to earlier. With regard to the healing that Piers teaches, it is clearly not simply a

[43] The healthy do not need a doctor, but those who are ill.
[44] 1975, pp. 107-9.

literal medical knowledge, since Christ did not in fact heal himself of his own wounds on the cross and so avoid death. "Warisshen" in fact suggests not physical healing, but spiritual and moral self-preservation against his enemy, perhaps his refusal to submit to the temptation to come down from the cross. Possibly there is a reference to the *Gloss* on Luke 5: 31 ("non egent qui sani sunt medico sed qui male habent"[45]), though it is the parallel text from Matthew 9: 12 which is actually quoted in 110a:

> *Medico*. Christus medicus qui miro medicandi genere *vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras*. Hoc medicamine serpentis venenum excluditur. Qui hoc medicamento utitur, non remanet [j]ejunus.[46] (*A doctor*. Christ is the doctor who by a wonderful kind of treatment *was wounded for our transgressions*. By this treatment, the serpent's poison is driven out. Whoever makes use of this medicine will not stay weak.) (PL 114, 258)

The *Gloss* thus implies support for Langland's perception of the saving power of Christ's vulnerability.

Another possible interpretation of lines 103-10a is that a totally human Piers is portrayed as some sort of spiritual guide to Christ during the hidden years before his public ministry. But the anonymous *Gloss* on Galatians 4: 4 ("at ubi venit plenitudo

[45] Those who are well do not need a doctor, but those who are sick.
[46] Emendation mine, supported by *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria*. Facsimile reprint of *editio princeps*, by Adolph Rusch of Strasbourg, 1480-1, ed. with introduction by Karlfried Froelich and Margaret T. Gibson (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992).

temporis misit Deus Filium suum factum ex muliere, factum sub lege"[47]) attributes the discernment of the fullness of time to Christ himself:

> *Plenitudo temporis.* Sciebat quando venire deberet, vel etiam pati etc. Non est enim hora ejus vel nostra, nisi voluntas ejus. Ante tamen longa series praeconum praemittenda erat. (*The fullness of time.* He knew when it was right for him to come, and also suffer etc. It is neither his hour nor ours, unless it is his will. Before then, a long series of heralds needed to be sent ahead.) (PL 114, 577)

In explaining Piers' role, Daniel Murtaugh has suggested that Jesus learns from his own human nature how to be healer and saviour of those who turn to him.[48] He takes as his starting-point an article by R. E. Kaske who argues that Jesus' human nature is here identified with Piers, as later in the poem.[49] Kaske quotes Hugh of St Cher to the effect that the Holy Spirit is the instructor of Christ. This would make sense in the C-text, but only if Greta Hort is right to identify the Holy Spirit and Liberum Arbitrium, on the basis of B xvi 223: "So is the Fader forth with the Sone and Fre Wille of bothe."[50] But this identification fails because the line is omitted in the C-text, and Liberum Arbitrium uses "the thridde shoriere, the whiche is *Spiritus-Sanctus*" to attack the devil in C xviii 51-3. Where the B-text is concerned, Kaske has to propose an identity between Piers and an allegorised John the Baptist as Christ's precursor, although there is no evidence for this in

[47] But when the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.
[48] Ibid. pp. 117-21.
[49] 'Patristic Exegesis: the Opposition', in *Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature: Selected English Institute Papers 1958-9*, ed. with foreword by Dorothy Bethurum (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 43-8.
[50] *Piers Plowman and Contemporary Religious Thought* (London: SPCK, 1938), pp. 113-4.

the poem. Hugh of St Cher does, however, identify John with the grace of God, which Kaske thinks would be congruent with his idea of the Holy Spirit as the teacher of Christ after his Baptism. But we do not know whether Langland had access to Hugh's *postillae*; and if, as Murtaugh claims, in the B-text, Piers is simply the human nature of Christ, this raises the difficulty of how Christ's human nature, as distinct from his experience and reflection, could have taught him to "warisshen hymselve".

There are several changes in C xviii 134-45, again in the general direction of consistency and explicitness. As Priscilla Martin points out, the C-text reduces the difficulty by emphasising the *plenitudo* as much as the "lechecraft".[51] *Plenitudo temporis* now refers to the beginning of Christ's healing ministry. Liberum Arbitrium is substituted for Piers as Christ's teacher of healing, and then only for the sake of others, not to save his own life.

To return to B xvi, the theme of Christ's vulnerability to human emotion is continued a few lines further on:

> Ac as he made that maistrie, *mestus cepit esse,*
> And wepte water with hise eighen – ther seighen it manye.
> Some that the sighte {sc. the raising of Lazarus} seighen seiden that tyme
> That he was leche of lyf, and lord of heigh hevene (115-8).

[51] *Piers Plowman: the Field and the Sower* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 88.

The raising of Lazarus is recounted in John 11: 35-38, one of the key biblical texts on the fullness of Christ's human nature. Though the lordship of Christ over "heigh hevene" is asserted, it is qualified by his human grief. However, the quotation in line 115 is from Matthew 26: 37, the narrative of the Agony in Gethsemane. The effect of joining the two passages is to double the sense of Christ's human emotions.

The common thread between these passages from the B-text is the self-limitation which God accepts in the Incarnation. This has two corollaries in the poem, firstly an acceptance that the Incarnate Christ does not know everything, and secondly, that in the B-text at any rate, human nature is free enough to play an active part in its own redemption. So Langland has taken the Church's official teaching that Christ was fully human, and drawn out implications that run counter to the main patristic interpretations of the Incarnation which, in the interests of preserving the doctrine of divine impassibility, reduce the reality of Christ's human nature. According to Langland, therefore, since Christ was fully human, he was exposed to real experiences of pain, death, poverty and temptation.

Returning now to the Harrowing of Hell, as well as his vulnerability to violence, Christ is also vulnerable to accusations of sin, if not actual sin. While it is Mercy who explicitly states the freedom of Christ from original sin: "Withouten wem into this world she broghte hym" (B xviii 131), she also initially raises the issue of the "gile" of Christ, though without any critical implications, by quoting *Pange, Lingua*:

So shal this deeth fordo – I dar my lif legge -

All that Deeth dide first thorugh the develes entisyng;

And right as thorugh [gilours] gile [bigiled was man formest],

So shal grace that al bigan make a good ende

[And bigile the gilour – and is a good sleighte]:

Ars ut artem falleret[52] (157-61a).

We recall that Dame Studie has already quoted similar words, from Cato in her case, which form part of a text advocating the *lex talionis* (B x 191-6). The same idea, though from a different source, seem to place a critical question against the moral purity of the act of redemption. Hugh White has drawn attention to some of the moral and theological ambiguities in this passus, centring on Christ's use of the same methods as Lucifer.[53] He observes: "…grace is in some sense guile, with good appearing therefore to be implicated in evil".[54] White's analysis is valuable, in that he points out the inherent moral riskiness of the Incarnation, which seems to involve Christ inevitably in the moral compromises inherent in all post-lapsarian human life, which Lucifer and his companions are not slow to point out. This may be a particular danger with the *Christus Victor* understanding of the saving work of Christ, which inevitably implies cunning or force. But it would be a mistake to see this as indicating Langland's sympathy for the devil. Lucifer is not in any way comparable to Milton's Satan. So the intransigent and self-justifying Lucifer accuses Christ of sinful actions: "If he reveth me of my right, he robbeth me by maistrie;/ For by

[52] Art so that he might destroy art.
[53] 'Book's Bold Speech', *Bulletin of John Rylands Library,* 77, 3 (1995), 31-46.
[54] Ibid. p. 42.

right and by reson the renkes that ben here/ Body and soule beth myne, bothe goode and ille" (276-8). These charges are, in the context of the poem, ironical and illustrate Lucifer's lack of self-awareness. So his talk of "the devil's rights" carries no weight, since what he gained was by robbery ("thefliche" and "felonliche", lines 339 and 352). He wins little sympathy, even from Satan, who also accuses him of "gile" (286). Much of Lucifer's complaint is answered by Christ, if not as an equal, at least as one worthy of a reasoned and humane response. The fact that Christ rebuts Lucifer's charges shows that he takes them seriously. He accuses Lucifer in turn of "gile" (335); his actions have been "ayeins alle reson" (335, 351). Christ freely acknowledges that both of them have practised guile by disguising themselves as something they are not, in order to win their ends, but justifies himself by claiming that:

> The Olde Lawe graunteth
> That gilours be bigiled – and that is good reson:
> *Dentem pro dente, et oculum pro oculo.*[55]
> *Ergo* soule shal soule quyte and synne to synne wende,
> And al that man hath mysdo, I man, wol amende it.
> Membre for membre [was amendes by the Olde Lawe],
> And lif for lif also – and by that lawe I clayme
> Adam and al his issue at my wille herafter (339-45).

Again, Dame Studie's words are recalled; but here the *lex talionis* is made the

[55] Tooth for tooth and eye for eye. Therefore…

justification for Christ's actions, instead of an expression of human vindictiveness. Christ also draws attention to his humanity as the vehicle of salvation (342). Again, he admits his actions and Lucifer's are in some sense comparable:

> So that with gile thow gete, thorugh grace it is ywonne.
> Thow Lucifer, in liknesse of a luther addere
> Gete by gile thyng that God lovede;
> And I, in liknesse of a leode, that Lord am of hevene,
> Graciousliche thi gile have quyt – go gile ayein gile!
> And as Adam and alle thorugh a tree deyden,
> Adam and alle thorugh a tree shal turne to lyve;
> And gile is bigiled, and in his gile fallen:
> *Et cecidit in foveam quam fecit*[56] (354-61a).

And again, the moral ambiguity implied in the Incarnation is suggested. But though outwardly identical, the "gile" of Lucifer is different from Christ's, in that his is intended to create death, while Christ's is life-bringing and gracious, a just outcome in which Lucifer falls into a trap he has laid himself. However, the danger of Docetism is apparent, with Christ describing himself as being in "liknesse of a leode", merely disguised as a human being, not a real one.

The C-text contains several important revisions. Lucifer is made more confident

[56] And fell into the pit he made.

of being left in possession of the captive souls, because God's nature is just and true:

> Thus this lord of liht such a lawe made,
> And sethe he is a lele lord y leue þat he wol nat
> Reuen vs of oure riht, sethe resoun hem dampnede.
> And sethen we haen ben sesed seuene thousand winter,
> And neuere was þer-aȝeyne and now wolde bigynne,
> Thenne were he unwrast of his word, þat witnesse is of treuthe (xx 306-11).

It is as if the rescue of the souls in hell would constitute wrong-doing on God's part. But Lucifer, as well as being manipulative, is deceiving himself; as the outcome of the debate of the four daughters of God will show, mercy and peace prevail over truth and righteousness. Gobelyn explicitly portrays the Incarnation as an act of deception, though his accusations are aimed at Lucifer, not Christ: "And as thow bigyledest gods ymages in goynge of an adder,/ So hath god bigiled vs alle in goynge of a weye" (326-7). Christ's reiteration of *ars ut artem falleret* in line 392a shows an even stronger commitment to the *Christus Victor* understanding of the passion than the B-text. He explicitly refutes Lucifer's charge of "maistrie" in 394. Grace now more explicitly transforms and justifies the "gile":

> So þat with gyle was gete, thorw grace is now ywonne,
> And as Adam and alle thorwe a tre deyede,

Adam and alle thorw a tre shal turne to lyue
And now bygynneth thy gyle on the to turne
And my grace to growe ay wyddore and wyddore (396-400).

The effect of these changes in the C-text is to intensify the conflict between Christ and Lucifer, making Lucifer a more formidable opponent, yet at the same time to diminish the force of the devils' accusations by attributing the salvation of Christ more strongly to grace, rather than force or cunning.

Returning to the B-text, Christ proclaims that it is his nature to have mercy on the human race, because he is bound by ties of kinship with them, reminding us that he and his mother are "sib to alle synfulle" (B v 636), and that Trajan proclaimed in B xi 198-207 that all are Christ's brothers:

Ac to be merciable to man thanne, my kynde it asketh,
For we beth bretheren of blood, but noght in baptisme alle.
Ac alle that beth myne hole bretheren, in blood and in baptisme,
Shul noght be dampned to the deeth that is withouten ende:
Tibi soli peccavi...[57] (376-9a).

Michael Kuczynski sees here an implied continuity between this verse from Psalm 50 and the following one ("Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum, et in peccato peperit me

[57] Against you only have I sinned…

mater mea"[58]).[59] Augustine interprets this as signifying Christ's freedom from original sin.[60] However, no manuscript of *Piers Plowman* continues the quotation beyond the end of verse 6, and it would be foreign to Langland's purpose in this context to differentiate Christ from the rest of humanity. In any case, as we have seen, Mercy has already borne witness to Christ's immunity from original sin (131).

Whereas in the B-text, Christ emphasises his oneness with his brethren, in the C-text, he refers to his "halue-brethrene" (xx 436), though they are "hole brethrene" in line 418. The "kynde" of Christ is ambiguous here; is it his divine or human nature that elicits this kindness, or both, though his human nature is made very explicit?

In addition, as in B xi, the social and political implications of the Incarnation are brought out. But this time, the humanity of Christ that is foregrounded is not that of a poor man, but an ideal king. Far from embracing triumphalism, Christ embodies a compassionate and gracious model of kingship, leaving open the possibility of mercy for the wicked:

> And I that am kyng of kynges shal come swich a tyme
> Ther doom to the deeth dampneth alle wikked;
> And if lawe wole I loke on hem, it lith in my grace

[58] For behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sin my mother gave me birth.
[59] *Prophetic Song: the Psalms as Moral Discourse in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 199.
[60] PL 36, 591.

Wheither they deye or deye noght for that they diden ille.

Be it any thyng abought, the boldnesse of hir synnes,

I may do mercy thorugh rightwisnesse, and alle my wordes trewe.

…….

Ac my rightwisnesse and right shal rulen al helle,

And mercy al mankynde before me in hevene.

For I were an unkynde kyng but I my kyn holpe –

And nameliche at swich a nede ther nedes help bihoveth:

Non intres in iudicium cum servo tuo[61] (385-90, 397-400a).

So *Christus Victor* still readily identifies himself with his incarnate self. Even in his hour of triumph, there is still continuity between Christ's mercy and his earthly compassion for the sinner. For it is the nature of kings to help, indeed to rescue, their families.

Some of the issues which appear settled at the end of B xviii are re-opened in xix and xx. Firstly, there is a retracing of Christ's earthly life. Conscience, again appearing as an innovative theologian as in C iii 332-405a, regales Will with another life of Christ in which he both upholds and parodies the *Christus Victor* trope, starting with Christ's growth from infancy to adulthood:

Ac for alle thise preciouse presents Oure Lord Prynce Jesus

Was neither kyng ne conquerour til he [comsede] wexe

[61] Do not enter into judgement with your servant.

In the manere of a man, and that by muchel sleighte –

As it bicometh a conquerour to konne manye sleightes,

And manye wiles and wit, that wole ben a ledere (B xix 96 -100).

"Wile" and "gile" are so close in sound and meaning that we are surely meant to be reminded of the accusations of "gile" against Christ in the previous passus. "Sleighte" is also used by Mercy to refer to the "bigiling" of Satan in B xviii 161. Then, perhaps parodying the contemporary *vitae Christi*, described in chapter three, Conscience foregrounds Christ's humanity by assigning the miracle at Cana in Galilee to his "juventee"(108), almost as if it were a prank; he calls him a "fauntekyn ful of wite" (118), and the remainder of the miracles are performed in "his moder absence" (124). This playful construction of the relationship between Jesus and Mary shows a completely benign vulnerability of Christ, this time taking the form of a human sense of fun after the intense drama of the Harrowing of Hell.

The second issue concerns the nature of kingship. The compassionate Christ of B xviii contrasts with the king of B xix who awards himself the freedom to take what he wants, since he is the source of the law:

I am kyng with croune the comune to rule

And Holy Kirke and clergie from cursed men to defende.

And if me lakketh to lyve by, the lawe wole I take it

Ther I may hastilokest it have – for I am heed of lawe:

For ye ben but membres and I above alle.

And sith I am youre aller heed, I am your aller heele,

And Holy Chirche chief help and chieftayn of the comune.

And what I take of yow two, I take it at the techynge

Of *Spiritus Iusticie* – for I jugge yow alle.

So may I boldly be housled, for I borwe nevere,

Ne crave of my commune but as my kynde asketh (470-80).

One cannot avoid the impression that, in differentiating himself from the "membres", the king is merely exploiting his status as ruler of the "comune" and defender of Holy Church, without conceding any responsibilities. Unlike Christ, he exercises naked power, without stooping to explain himself, let alone make restitution. He justifies his actions by recourse, firstly to the *Spiritus Iusticie,* which he believes he has, simply on the strength of his role as judge, together with the authority to interpret the law in a sense favourable to himself; and secondly, to his "kynde" which, in its selfishness and high-handedness, is diametrically opposite to the "kynde" of Christ.

The king is not the only counterpoint to Christ in the Dobest passūs; there is also Nede, who parodies both the king and Christ. Nede is such an ambivalent figure that critics differ strongly as to his significance. Robert Frank[62]and Robert Adams[63] see him as an evil influence, while Lawrence Clopper[64] strives to rehabilitate him. B xx opens

[62] *Piers Plowman and the Scheme of Salvation: an Interpretation of Dowel, Dobet and Dobest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 113-4.
[63] 'The Nature of Need', *Traditio*, 34 (1978), 273-301.

with Nede rebuking Will for his failure to take what he needs, before turning to justify his own opposite behaviour. In spite of Adams' strictures against Nede's "self-congratulatory tone, the tendency to emphasise temperance to the exclusion of the other cardinal virtues, and the casual acceptance of theft" (281), and the damning evidence of his role as harbinger of Antichrist, we are not absolved from the necessity of examining Nede as a contrast with the king. Like the king, Nede takes whatever he wants, justifying himself by an appeal to the "lawe of kynde" (B xx 18-22); the difference is that Nede takes it for survival. His appeal to the *Spiritus Temperancie* is more tenable than the king's reliance on the *Spiritus Justicie*, for, as A. V. C. Schmidt observes, temperance is "intrinsically incapable of perversion; one cannot, by definition, be too temperate"[65].

In the complex lines 34-9, Nede admits that on a human level, he sometimes deprives other people of what they need, and so humbles them. However, he also places himself next to God, which may mean that, Lucifer-like, he is snatching at equality with God; but in that case, it is difficult to see the theological point, since he seems to have nothing else in common with Lucifer or Adam and Eve. Or it may mean that Nede identifies himself with the Second Person of the Trinity who becomes needy in his incarnate life while, in his role as Providence, he inflicts need on people for their souls' good. He justifies himself by reference to the Incarnation, in terms familiar by now:

And God al his grete joye goostlich he lefte,

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[64] *'Songs of Rechelessnesse': Langland and the Franciscans* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 71-2, 74, 93-9.
[65] 1995, p. 489.

And cam and took mankynde and bicam nedy.

So he was nedy, as seith the Book, in manye sondry places,

That he seide in his sorwe on the selve roode,

"Both foxe and fowel may fle to hole and crepe

And the fissh hath fyn to flete with to reste,

Ther nede hath ynome me" (40-6).

Here we have the *communicatio idiomatum* in its classic form; since God is the subject of the first sentence, the divine nature of Jesus suffers, not simply destitution, the lack of a home, but the Passion.

However, it does seem clear that just as the king subverts *Christus Victor*, so Nede subverts the king by taking over his tropes and arguments. Indeed, the victorious Christ now seems powerless to impose his will in the post-Pentecost world. The result is moral and spiritual anarchy, which is about to be intensified by the assault of Antichrist, the image of man at its worst, as Christ has shown himself to be its image at its best. Significantly, Antichrist comes in "mannes forme" (B xx 52) and "gerte gile growe as he a god weere" (57). This recalls the accusations of "gile" against Christ, thus underlining Antichrist's role and status. So he recapitulates the sin of Lucifer, as demonstrated in B xv 47-51a, though he was supposedly defeated in B xviii.

So Langland, in spite of occasionally flirting with Docetism, regularly emphasises the vulnerability of Jesus' humanity, resisting applying divine impassibility to his

incarnate life and suggesting the vulnerability of the Godhead. He portrays the enlargement of divine experience through Christ's undergoing of human suffering and death. Christ's taking of human nature involves oneness with the entire human race. As well as the poor, women are also included, by inference from the dual gendering of Christ in B xi 121-2. The value that Langland places on marriage throughout the poem also supports this. He even goes so far as to suggest the vulnerability of Christ to commit actual sin, as distinct from his immunity from the inheritance of original sin. He bestows a certain humanity, for want of a better word, on his presentation of God as merciful and compassionate, very different from the quite ruthless God of the Augustinian tradition. The intimacy of the relationship of God and humanity throughout *Piers Plowman* is very different from Augustine's emphasis on the divine transcendence, at the expense of his immanence. One also becomes aware of the distance between Langland and the *Moderni*, for, like the neo-Augustinians, they also end up with too great a gulf between God and humanity for either to be able to communicate with the other.

Does Langland draw on the *Gloss* in his presentation of the humanity of Christ, and if so, how? We have seen that the *Gloss* often fights shy of the full implications of Christ's humanity; its concern is rather to uphold the divine impassibility. So again, as with his treatment of the image of God, Langland has to reject much of what he finds in the *Gloss*, this time for two reasons. The first is because the patristic understanding of the Incarnation which it contains is too abstract and too prone to keep the two natures of Christ apart; the result is that, as we saw in the *Gloss* on 2 Corinthians 8: 9, no ethical teaching can be extracted from it, notwithstanding that the context of the verse is a

passage urging generosity for a collection for famine relief. The second reason is because the doctrine of divine impassibility serves to keep God too remote from human life to be a credible Saviour on any level, eternally as well as historically. St Augustine's gross misinterpretation of Psalm 21: 1 is a case in point. Again, over-emphasis on impassibility has ethical implications, for it results in the missing of opportunities to teach about repentance.

However, on the other hand, Langland may well have drawn on the *Gloss* for his depiction of Nede. Robert Adams has shown how dependent he is on Gregory's exegesis of Job 41: 13.[66] However, the *Gloss* on Job 33 - 42 consists entirely of the relevant part of the *Moralia in Job*; the compilers here abandon their normal excerpting practice. Langland may have had access to Gregory's *Moralia*, but the untraceable quotation in B x 295-8, allegedly from the *Moralia*, and the misattribution to Gregory in B vii 74-5, make this doubtful. So it is hard to resist the conclusion that in the picture of Nede, Langland did draw on the *Gloss.*

Both the fact that Nede is the king's *alter ego,* and the earlier call in B xi 184-8 for compassion for the poor on the part of everyone, suggest that Langland is here also wishing to extend the teaching of the *Gloss* from the clergy to the laity. The image of God in man is not restricted to the clergy, as Christ's role as king in B xviii bears such eloquent witness. In fact, Langland suggests that Christ is the image of man on which laypeople are to model themselves.

[66] 'The Nature of Need in *Piers Plowman* XX', *Traditio*, 39 (1983), 281-7

Since the patristic emphasis on divine impassibility is so ethically unproductive, Langland searches for an alternative theology which will support his ethical and political agenda. He finds it in the *communicatio idiomatum* which is a corollary of the doctrine of the Incarnation. As we have seen, in *Piers Plowman,* the Incarnation implies a compassionate and sometimes vulnerable form of kingship, constituting a consistent rejection of the arrogant and inhumane exercise of royal power which exploits the people, instead of delivering them from oppression and showing them mercy. A good and compassionate king is therefore undoubtedly a source of social cohesion. But the implications go further than the fourteenth-century monarchy. Langland presents Christ as calling the whole of society, especially, but not only, the rich, to embody and practise the same compassion he showed in his earthly life. To commend generosity and love to his contemporaries, Langland has found it necessary, like Julian of Norwich, to abandon an impassible and remote God, and draw upon the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*, in order to assert the divine compassion for a world of sin and suffering, in the most immediate fashion possible.

NINE

SCIENTIA AND *SAPIENTIA*

We saw in chapter seven how St Augustine identified the image of God in man with the possession of reason. It became clear that Langland's view was that the image of God means being morally godlike, specifically the practice of compassion, as shown in the Incarnate life of Christ in chapter eight. The purpose of this chapter is to explore Langland's handling of the relationship between knowledge and wisdom, and their relationship to love and grace. Knowledge is obviously an important theme in *Piers Plowman,* so much so that Mary Carruthers regards it as "an epistemological poem, a poem about the problem of knowing truly".[1] One possible approach to the theme deals with the frequently-occurring phrases "kynde wit" and "kynde knowynge" which have already been investigated in great detail by Hugh White.[2] I do not propose to go over the same ground.

The second approach to knowledge in *Piers Plowman* is to examine the concepts of *scientia* or knowledge, and *sapientia* or wisdom, and their relationship. The words can be found together in the Old Testament Wisdom literature, for example in Proverbs 1: 7 ("Timor Domini principium scientiae, sapientiam atque doctrinam stulti dispiciunt"[3]),

[1] *The Search for St Truth: A Study of Meaning in Piers Plowman* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 10.
[2] *Nature and Salvation in Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1988). He considers both to be ways of knowing rather than a body of knowledge.
[3] The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

where they seem to be synonymous and in parallel. But in the New Testament, a distinction is apparent, for instance in I Corinthians 12: 8 ("Alii quidem per Spiritum datur sermo sapientiae; alii autem sermo scientiae secundum eumdem Spiritum"[4]). As we shall see, the Fathers turn this distinction into a hierarchy.

An important contribution to the study of *sapientia* is that of Mary Davlin who lists a number of relevant New Testament passages in which knowledge and love are linked.[5] But she fails to notice that they are only equated in Philippians 3: 7-11 and Ephesians 3: 19, and elsewhere knowledge is always secondary. Crucially, she makes no distinction between knowledge and wisdom. She claims, without justifying it, that "it is clear that in certain passages, 'kynde wit' is best translated as divine wisdom".[6]

The relationship between *scientia* and *sapientia* has been treated more fully by James Simpson.[7] Building on the approach of Mary Carruthers, he outlines the development of the two concepts, especially the establishment of a hierarchy in which *scientia* is inferior to *sapientia*. He shows how, while Augustine treats *scientia* in intellectual terms in *De Doctrina Christiana*, as a preparation for *sapientia*, he gives it a

[4] To some indeed is given the word of wisdom by the Spirit; to others, according to the same Spirit, the word of knowledge.
[5] '"Kynde Knowing" as a Middle English Equivalent for "Wisdom", in *Piers Plowman* B,' MÆ, 50 (1981), 5-17.
[6] 1981, 5.
[7] 'From Reason to Affective Knowledge: Modes of Thought and Poetic Form' in *Piers Plowman',* MÆ, 55 (1986), 1-23 (a); 'The Role of Scientia in *Piers Plowman'*, in Gregory Katzmann and James Simpson (eds.), *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature; Essays in Honour of G.H. Russell,* 1986, pp. 49-65 (b).

moral dimension in *De Trinitate* (1986 a, 2).[8] In the Middle Ages, he shows, a debate was joined between those whose approach to theology was speculative and intellectual, and those who saw theology in affective terms, in other words more to do with the will and the emotions. Alexander of Hales, for example, differentiates between *scientia* as knowing by sight, and *sapientia* as knowing by taste.[9]

While Simpson sees the affective superseding and transcending the speculative, Gillian Rudd makes her book hinge on the dialectic between *scientia* and *sapientia*. [10] She writes:

> The basic contrast between *sapientia* and *scientia* is obvious from the roots of the two words. *Scientia* comes from a verb (*scio*) and so is associated with the active acquisition of knowledge and learning. One enacts a verb, one deduces knowledge and may put it into practice; what one learns tends to be abstract, a theory, which can be understood fully, or proved, only when applied. In contrast *sapientia* comes from a noun – *sapor,* taste – which sums up the world of the senses and trusts to the reality of experience rather than theory. It is perhaps this more affective aspect of *sapientia* that means it is often regarded as the higher of the two.[11]

[8] 1986 a, 2.
[9] Alexander of Hales, *Summa Theologiae* (2 volumes) (Cologne: Johann Gymnich, 1622) Part 1, qu. 1, mem.1, resolutio 1, p. 1.
[10] *Managing Language in Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994).
[11] ibid. p. 19.

This does not always seem to be the case in medieval theology, and in particular is not entirely accurate as a description of what happens in *Piers Plowman*; as we shall see, the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia* is sometimes blurred or reversed.

Rudd in particular fails to see *sapor* as a metaphor, with the result that she grounds *sapientia* in "the world of the senses", which in fact is mostly disapproved of in medieval ascetic theology and eschewed in favour of an inward search for God. She herself quotes the pseudo-Bernardine passage from which Scripture's censure of Will in B xi 3 is taken which demonstrates this:[12]

> Multi multa sciunt et se ipsos nesciunt. Alios inspiciunt, et se ipsos deserunt. Deum quaerunt per ista exteriora deserentes sua interiora, quibus interior est Deus. Idcirco ab exterioribus[13] redeam ad interiora, et ab inferioribus ad superiora ascendam: ut possim cognoscere unde venio, aut quo vado; quid sum, vel unde sum; et ita per cognitionem mei valeam pervenire ad cognitionem Dei. (Many people know many things, but do not know themselves. They scrutinise others, but ignore themselves. They seek God through these external things, ignoring the things within themselves, although God is internal. Therefore I will return from the external things to the internal, and ascend from the inferior to the superior: so that I may know whence I come or where I am going; what I am, or from what I

[12] Ibid. p. 172.
[13] Emendation mine.

come; and so through contemplation of myself, I may come to the contemplation of God.) (PL 184, 485)

Rudd's interpretation of this passage is questionable. She argues that Scripture's words throw Will "into the deeper consciousness of the inner dream where he meets all the impulses that drive mankind". In reality, the Land of Longynge episode reads more like the unfortunate result of her scorn. One wonders whether self-knowledge in the pseudo-Bernardine sense is exactly the same as the acknowledgement of "the impulses that drive mankind" and whether the world of the senses is really the domain of *sapientia*?

A better interpretation might have been obtained by reading what Pseudo-Bernard writes next:

> Quanto namque in cognitione mei proficio, tanto ad cognitionem Dei accedo. Secundum interiorem hominem tria in mente mea invenio, per quae Deum recolo, conspicio et concupisco. Sunt autem haec tria, memoria, intelligentia, voluntas sive amor. (To the extent that I advance in the knowledge of myself, to that extent I enter upon the knowledge of God. Pursuing the inner man, I find three things in my mind through which I remember, look upon and desire God. These are the three things: memory, intelligence, and will, or love.)

So the inward is purely rational, and nothing to do with "the impulses that drive mankind". In *Piers Plowman*, the episodes of the Seven Deadly Sins and the Land of

Longynge reveal that Langland too shares this perception of the world of the senses as morally dangerous, at the very least a distraction from Dowel. But as we saw in chapter seven, going inwards later brings Will to the knowledge of the image of Christ (B xv 161-2a).

Rudd also ignores the hierarchy described by Simpson, in spite of the passage from St Augustine's *De Trinitate* from which she quotes at the end of the above paragraph:

> Scientia ergo nostra Christus est, sapientia quoque nostra idem Christus est. Ipse nobis fidem de rebus temporalibus inserit, ipse de sempiternis exhibit veritatem. Per ipsum pergimus ad ipsum, tendimus per scientiam ad sapientiam; ab uno tamen eodemque Christo non recidimus *in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi*. (Christ therefore is our knowledge, and the same Christ is also our wisdom. He himself sows faith in us concerning temporal things, he himself shows the truth concerning eternal things. Through him we approach him, we progress through knowledge to wisdom; from one and the same Christ *in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge* we do not retreat.) (PL 42, 1034)

In calling Christ our wisdom and our knowledge, and in giving faith a role in knowing temporal things, Augustine creates parity between *scientia* and *sapientia*; but at the same time, there is a hierarchy in that knowledge is made the preparation for wisdom. As might

be expected from his interpretation of the image of God in man being constituted by reason, as examined in chapter seven, there is nothing here about love and no sign of a relationship between wisdom, knowledge and ethics. Also important is Augustine's earlier treatment of the second part of John 1: 14 ("et vidimus gloriam ejus, gloriam quasi Unigeniti a Patre, plenum gratiae et veritatis"[14]). He links grace with *scientia* and truth with *sapientia*:

> Si gratiam referamus ad scientiam, veritatem ad sapientiam, puto nos ab illa duarum istarum rerum distinctione, quam commendavimus, non abhorrere. (If we link grace with knowledge, and truth with wisdom, I think we should not withdraw from the distinction we have commended between those two things.) (PL 42, 1033-4)

This too creates parity between *scientia* and *sapientia*; and again, there is no sign of grace and truth possessing any ethical content.

Though individual passages from the *Gloss* will be referred to in connection with the contexts in which relevant verses are quoted in the poem, one of general relevance, from the *Gloss* on Matthew 6: 12, already quoted in chapter six, should be mentioned here also:

Scientia quippe ad usum temporalium pertinet, quae virtus est, in vitandis malis et

[14] And we have beheld his glory, glory as of the Only-Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

petendis bonis, ut nostra et aliorum contagia ploremus, bona cupiamus. (Knowledge, which is virtue, is clearly relevant to the use of temporal things, in avoiding sins and seeking good things, so that also we should weep for our sins and desire good things.) (PL 114, 102)

Here, far from there being any opposition between knowledge and ethics, the two are equated, and knowledge has explicit ethical consequences in the use of temporal things.

By contrast, the anonymous *Gloss* on I Corinthians 12: 8, while still associating *scientia* with temporal things, establishes a hierarchy between it and *sapientia*:

Sapientia est in contemplatione aeternorum. Scientia in actione temporalium. Unde Job: *Ecce pietas*. Id est, cultus Dei est *sapientia*… Et quis hic cultus ejus, nisi amor et cognitio ejus? abstinere autem a malis scientia est; mala autem in temporalibus sunt, in quibus caute et prudenter versandum est. Cui datur sapientia est quasi sol; cui scientia, luna in nocte saeculi; quibus caetera dantur stellae sunt: quia haec in nocte sunt necessaria. (Wisdom subsists in the contemplation of eternal things, knowledge in the activity of temporal things. Hence Job: *Behold piety*. That is, the worship of God is *wisdom*…And what is this worship of him but love and knowledge of him? To abstain from sins is knowledge; sins exist in earthly things, with which one should be occupied carefully and prudently. He to whom wisdom is given is like the sun; he to whom knowledge is given is like the moon in the night of the world; those to whom the rest is given are the stars,

because they are necessary in the night.) (PL 114, 540-1)

Although the glossator links *cognitio* with *amor*, he makes knowledge, though again concerned with the avoidance of sin, inferior to wisdom and vulnerable to sin in earthly things.

The same issues can be found among Langland's contemporaries, though they usually substitute love for wisdom. Famously, the *Cloud*-author sharply contrasts thought and love, and demands the abandonment of the use of the intellect in contemplation:

> …bot of God Himself can no man thinke. And therefore I wol leve al that thing that I can think and chese to my love that thing that I cannot think. For whi He may wel be loved, bot not thought. By love may He be geten and holden; bot bi thought neither.[15]

But by love, the writer means only the love of God; acts of charity towards people are excluded. Langland is, however, critical of contemplation (B xx 274), as a non-ethical and elitist form of divine-human encounter. So Vasta's identification of contemplation with "kynde knowynge", quoted by Davlin, is not tenable.[16] It is difficult to imagine Langland having any sympathy for the theology of unknowing, when so much of the poem, far from pushing everyone and everything but God under a cloud of forgetting, is

[15] *The Cloud of Unknowing,* ed. by Patrick Gallagher (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University Press, 1997), p. 36.
[16] 1981, 5.

about love for people. As the previous chapter showed, the affinity between God and man is too close, and the moral and social irrelevance of unknowing too great, for Langland to find a place for it within his activist and historicising orientation. The only time when love of God and love of neighbour are separated in the poem is in the speech of the unsympathetic Clergie who may not be quoting Piers accurately (B xiii 127). The danger is that looking inward to seek the knowledge of God might preclude social activism and the desire for reform, as happens in *The Cloud of Unknowing.* But in *Piers Plowman*, the image of God or Christ in the heart leads to charity (B v 605-8, xv 161-4).

Will's quest for "kynde knowynge" begins with his encounter with Lady Holi Chirche in Passus i. He at least begins from a right place:

> Thanne I courbed on my knees and cried hire of grace,
> And preide her pitously to preye for my synnes,
> And also kenne me kyndely on Crist to bileve,
> That I myghte werchen His wille that wroghte me to man*ne* (79-82).

He is not seeking knowledge for knowledge's sake, but so that he may live according to the purpose of his Creator. Epistemology and ethics are thus linked. This is in accordance with another insight of St Augustine's, his identification of orthodoxy with orthopraxis:

> Porro fide titubante, charitas etiam ipsa languescit. Nam si a fide quisque ceciderit, a charitate etiam necesse est cadat. Non enim potest diligere quod esse

non credit: porro si et credit et diligit, bene agendo et praeceptis morum bonorum obtemperando efficit, ut etiam speret se ad id quod diligit esse venturum. Itaque tria haec sunt, quibus et scientia omnis et prophetia militat, fides, spes, charitas. (Moreover, when faith wavers, charity also itself is enfeebled. For if someone falls away from faith, it is inevitable that he will also fall away from charity. For one cannot love what one does not believe to be true: moreover, if he loves and believes, he achieves this by doing well and complying with the precepts of good morals, so that he may hope to come to that which he loves. Therefore, there are these three, which all knowledge and prophecy serve as a soldier, faith, hope and love.) (PL 34, 35)

But there is no mention of wisdom or the image of God here. Normally, however, Will does not keep faith and charity together, preferring to intellectualise Truth and ignore the demands of love. His interests in fact are often so intellectual as to distract him from embarking on a loving way of life. He admits to Lady Holi Chirche that he has no natural knowledge: "Yet have I no kynde knowynge," quod I, "Yet mote ye kenne me better/ By what craft in my cors it {sc. Treuthe} comseth and where" (138-9). Like pseudo-Bernard and his turning inwards, Lady Holi Chirche replies that it resides in his heart; but unlike pseudo-Bernard, she confronts Will with the practical demands of love in action:

It is a kynde knowynge that kenneth in thyn herte
For to loven thi Lord levere than thiselve,
No dedly synne to do, deye theigh thow sholdest –

This I trowe to be truthe; who kan teche thee better,

Loke thow suffer hym to seye, and sithen lere it after;

For thus witnesseth his word; werche thow therafter (142-7).

But Will seems incapable of grasping this; not before B xv 161-4 can he access this knowledge, this charity, in his own heart.

Let us now look at Piers, the other main extra-clergial character in the poem. He has no interest in acquiring knowledge and wisdom; he already knows Truthe "kyndely" (B v 538). After the tearing of the Pardon, when he commits himself to a new way of life, he speaks, not of *sapor*, but the avoidance of eating. He rejects "bely joye" (B vii 119), undertakes vigils of mourning, "though whete breed me faille" (121), quoting Psalm 41: 4: ("*Fuerunt michi lacrime mee panes die ac nocte*").[17] (124a). His desire will be to obey the Gospel injunction to avoid anxiety (127) and to emulate the birds, whom God provides with "mete in winter" (129). It is Abstynence the Abbess who has taught him his abc, not an institution of learning (133). So he undermines the association of *sapientia* with taste.

Once Will has embarked on the quest for Dowel, his desire for "kynde knowynge" is frequently foregrounded. So at the end of his encounter with the friars, he admits he has no "kynde knowynge" to understand what they have just said about free

[17] My tears have been my bread day and night.

will and good works: “I have no kynde knowynge,” quod I, “to conceyve alle thi wordes,/ Ac if I may lyve and loke, I shal go and lerne bettre” (B viii 57-8). Here, for the first time in the poem, though not explicitly, we have the *scientia/ sapientia* binary; “kynde knowynge” seems to correspond to *scientia* in the academic sense; living and looking to the experiential *sapientia*. This turn towards experience and observation seems truly startling. He speaks as if they represent second-best, but the rest of the poem will demonstrate that what he eventually learns from experience and observation will be much more secure and deeply-rooted than what can be acquired by the intellect.

However, still fixated on an academic approach, and treating the question of how to live so as to be saved as an intellectual question, he adds: “For more kynde knowynge I coveite to lerne -/ How Dowel, Dobet and Dobest doon among the peple” (B viii 110-1). Significantly in line 110, he uses the word “coveite”, which in the B-text always has overtones of sinfulness. Will’s desire for knowledge is not about himself and his own moral quest, but with the generality of the people, as if he had not seen enough of society during the *Visio.*

Will’s next interlocutor is Wit. His epistemological importance appears only retrospectively, in the light of Dame Studie’s contemptuous dismissal of him. Wit is an embodiment of *scientia*. His speech resembles an encyclopaedic *compilatio*, beginning with the allegory of Castle Caro, made by Kynde out of the four elements, continuing with the doctrine of the image of God in man and adding an exposition of the Cain story, teaching on marriage and the example of the Jews in performing works of charity. Yet he

too turns towards *sapentia*, quoting the verse *inicium sapiencie timor Domini*[18] in A xi 81a and B ix 94a. Schmidt gives the Biblical reference as Psalm 110: 10, but the verse also occurs in Proverbs 1: 7, 9: 10 and elsewhere in the Old Testament. The *Gloss* on this verse, excerpted from Hrabanus Maurus, similarly distinguishes two types of fear:

> Duo sunt timores Domini,[19] primus servilis, qui principium scientiae et sapientiae vocatur, secundus amicalis, qui perfectionem sapientiae comitatur. Timor servilis est principium sapientiae, quia quisquis post errorem delictorum sapere incipit primo timore divino corripitur, ne ad tormenta ducatur, sed hunc timorem perfecta dilectio foras mittit. Succedit autem timor Domini sanctus permanens in saeculum saeculi; quem non excludit, sed auget charitas. Ipse est quo timet filius bonus, nec in modico oculos amantissimi patris offendat. Nam inchoativo timore servilis adhuc animus metuit, ne ab irato Domino poenis subigatur, [20]uterque autem timor in futura vita cessabit, charitas vero nunquam excidit. (There are two fears of the Lord; the first is servile, which is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom; the second is friend-like, which accompanies the perfection of wisdom. Servile fear is the beginning of wisdom, because whoever begins to be wise after the error of sin is rebuked by the first divine fear, lest he be brought to torments, but perfect love casts out this fear. There follows the holy fear of the Lord, staying fixed for ever, which charity does not exclude, but increases. It is that with which the good son fears, lest he offend in a small way the eyes of his most loving father. For the

[18] The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
[19] The text of the *Gloss* breaks off here.
[20] The text of the *Gloss* resumes here.

> servile soul is still afraid with the initial fear, lest it be driven under by punishments from an angry God. However both fears will cease in the future life, but truly love will never disappear.) (PL 113, 1081; 111, 679)

So while charity increases wisdom on earth, it will replace it in heaven. For Wit, the fear of the Lord by itself is inadequate unless accompanied by love: "That dredeth God, he dooth wel; that dredeth hym for love/ And drad hym noght for drede of vengeaunce, dooth therefore the bettre" (95-6).

The question of "science" explicitly comes to the fore in Dame Studie's speech in B x. Paradoxically, in view of her name, she is determinedly anti-intellectual, and is the first to blur the distinction between *sapientia* and *scientia*. She begins by ridiculing Wit's authority to tell "wisdomes" (5). She says that wisdom and wit are now debased by their use by the covetous (18), reminding us of Will's "coveiting" of "kynde knowynge" in B viii 110-1. She goes on to evince great hostility to theological speculation (51-5, 103-114a). She quotes the Pauline injunction *Non plus sapere quam oportet*[21] (118a), attributing it to Augustine. But when Will asks to be taught "kyndeli to know what is Dowel" (148), she cannot answer and has to direct him to Clergie and Scripture. Far from behaving with grace and humility, however, she feels it right to boast some superiority over Scripture, claiming to have "sette hire to Sapience and to the Sauter glosed" (172, C xi 118).[22] The collocation of Sapience and the "Sauter glosed" is perhaps not accidental;

[21] Do not be wiser than you ought to be.
[22] For discussion on the Glossed Psalter, see chapter one.

it was commonplace to identify the Wisdom of God with Christ and to interpret the Psalms christologically, for example Augustine's exegesis of Psalm 3: 1:

> *Psalmus* de passione et resurrectione Christi… A cujus facie fugisse quanquam historice possit accipi, quando illo discedente secessit cum caeteris in montem; tamen spiritualiter, quando mentem Judae Filius Dei, id est virtus et sapientia Dei deseruit, cum eum diabolus penitus invasit. (*A psalm* about the passion and resurrection of Christ… From whose face it can be accepted that he {sc. Christ} fled, albeit historically, when, as he {sc. Judas} went in a different direction, he withdrew with the others to the mount; spiritually also, when the Son of God, that is the power and wisdom of God, went out of Judas's mind when the devil completely entered him.) (PL 36, 73) [23]

"Sapience" here is ambiguous; an alternative meaning is the biblical Wisdom of Solomon, as in B iii 333. Yet Dame Studie is "tened" by Theologie (182), unless it is infused with love: "It is no science, forsoothe, for to sotile inne./ A ful lethi thing it were if that love [therinne] were" (185-6). This places her among those theologians whose perspective is affective, not speculative. But then, contradictorily, she quotes the pagan "science" of Cato approvingly: "In oother science it seith, I seigh it in Catoun,/ *Qui simulat verbis, nec corde est fidus amicus,/ [Tu quoque fac simile: sic ars deluditur*

[23] This has been preferred to the garbled version in the *Gloss* (PL 113, 847).

arte]"[24] (191-b). She says Theologie's teaching is the exact opposite, though this is inconsistent with her recent rejection of it:

> He kenneth us the contrarie ayein Catons wordes,
> For he biddeth us be as bretheren, and bidde for our enemys
> And loven hem that lyen on us, and lene hem whan hem nedeth,
> And do good ayein yvel – God hymself it hoteth (198-20l).

This foreshadows the words of Scripture (B x 354), and the practice of Piers (B xix 434-40). Dame Studie then says that there "is no science under sonne so sovereyn for the soule" compared with love (208). Love is here a science; there is no link with *sapientia*. Next, she turns on the other secular arts such as Astronomy, which she denounces as evil, and Geometry, seeing sorcery as "the sovereyn book that to the science longeth" (212), together with trickery in alchemy (214). Their purpose is to deceive people (217). Dame Studie's confusion is apparent; she is inconsistent towards *scientia*, she ignores *sapientia*, but shows some appreciation of love.

By the end of B x, Will has despaired of the value of the intellect. In a naïve enthusiasm for Augustine, he misquotes or misrepresents the *Confessions*:

> The doughtieste doctour and devinour of the Trinitee

[24] He who dissimulates in his words, and is not at heart a faithful friend - you also do the same; thus art is deceived by art.

Was Austyn the olde, and heighest of the foure,

Seide thus in a sermon – I seigh it written ones –

"*Ecce ipsi idioti rapiunt celum ubi nos sapientes in inferno mergimur –*"[25]

And that is to mene to Englissh men, moore ne lesse,

Arn none rather yravysshed fro the righte bileve

Than are these konnynge clerkes that knowe manye bokes,

Ne none sonner ysaved, ne sadder of bileve

Than plowmen and pastours and povere commune laborers,

Souteres and shepherdes (452-61).

Will here is desperately trying to show off his knowledge, while at the same time sabotaging himself by commending the unlearned, and pointing to the intellect's occlusion of what is really needed for salvation (452-75a). One might also ask if Augustine himself was a "konnynge clerk" who was "yravysshed fro the righte bileve", though perhaps the wise ones in Will's mind are the *Moderni* rather than the neo-Augustinians.

Dame Studie's hostility to academic knowledge in the form of the liberal arts is taken up by Trajan:

"Lawe withouten love," quod Troianus, "ley ther a bene –

Or any science under sonne, the sevene arts and alle!

[25] Behold, the unlearned themselves capture heaven, while we wise ones are drowned in hell.

- But thei ben lerned for Oure Lordes love, lost is al the tyme,
For no cause to cacche silver therby, ne to be called a maister,
But al for love of Oure Lord and the bet to love the peple.
For Seint Johan seide it, and sothe arn hise wordes:
Qui non diligit manet in morte" [26] (B xi 170-5a).

This verse, I John 3: 14, is the obverse of 1 John 4: 18 which Repentaunce and Wit quote. Trajan gives the primacy to love over "science" and "the sevene arts". Intellectual knowledge may be a distraction from the supreme imperative of love; it may even in fact be death-dealing, unless acquired for the sake of the love of Our Lord and the people. So Langland here distances himself still more from Augustine. This is not to rule out *scientia* altogether; what Trajan means is its subordination to love, making it the means to an ethical and pastoral end.

Will becomes something of an empiricist in B xi, learning the hard way from experience, the visions of the Land of Longing and Middelerthe, and Reson's rebuke. Ymaginatif also rebukes him because he has ended his contemplation of creation in B xi by criticising Reson. The implication is that, though the contemplation of creation is good and commanded by God, and meant to raise Will to the love of his Creator (325), questioning the rationality of the created order is wrong.

It is Will's encounter with Ymaginatif which forms the key passage in the poem

[26] He who does not love abides in death,

for this whole question (B xi-xii). In Ymaginatif's speech, an erratic debate takes place between *scientia* and *sapientia*, while both are subordinated to love. In line 29a, he quotes I Corinthians 13: 13 ("nunc autem manent fides, spes, caritas, tria haec; major autem his est charitas"[27]). In the *Gloss* on this verse, knowledge is subordinated to love, but still has a supporting role:

> *Fides, spes*, *etc*. Quibus scientia et prophetia militat, sine quibus nullius justi est vita ista perfecta. *Major autem horum est charitas*. Charitas est cui hic fides et spes non potest deesse, sed fides et spes sine charitate possunt esse. (*Faith, hope etc.* With which knowledge and prophecy serve as a soldier, without which the life of no righteous man is perfect. *But love is greater than these.* Charity is his from whom this faith and hope cannot be absent, but faith and hope can exist without charity.) (PL 114, 543)

As we saw above, *quibus scientia et prophetia militat* is an Augustinian phrase. We shall see again the differentiation between the inadequate Faith and Hope on one hand, and the all-sufficient Charity, embodied in the Samaritan on the other, when they are faced with the *semyvif* in B xvii 58-80. Up to this point in the poem, "kynde wit" seems to be regarded as a good thing, since Will's object in possessing it is to know what is Dowel. It comes as a surprise, then, when Ymaginatif seems to regard it as the cause of self-inflicted disaster for Lucifer and others, on the same level as material possessions: "Catel and kynde wit was combraunce to hem alle" (B xii 45). He has changed the meaning of

[27] Now these three remain, faith, hope and love; but love is greater than these.

"kynde wit" to refer to intellectual curiosity, harking back to the "sciences" condemned by Dame Studie. Here he is in the Augustinian camp, for as we saw in chapter five, *curiositas* is one root of sin in Augustine's eyes. Ymaginatif is inconsistent, on one hand extolling the importance of learning; on the other, dismissing the value of "sapience", even that of Solomon (41). He warns against the excessive desire for knowledge:

> So catel and kynde wit acombreth ful manye;
> Wo is hym that weldeth but he hem wel despende:
> *Scient[es] et non facient[es] variis flagellis vapulab[un]t.*[28]
> Sapience, seith the Bok, swelleth a mannes soule:
> *Sapiencia inflat*…[29] (55-7a).

Scientes might imply those who engage in study, but fail to practice what they learn. Also it does not seem to have been noticed that the Vulgate text of I Corinthians 8: 1 actually reads *scientia inflat, caritas vero aedificat*, instead of *sapientia*. One can only assume that Langland's substitution is deliberate, for no Vulgate manuscript has *scientia*. The result is a blurring of the biblical distinction between wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom is reduced to the level of worldly wisdom. The *Gloss* certainly seems to underline St Paul's wariness of *scientia*:

> *Scientia inflat.* Per se inutilis est scientia, cum charitate utilis. Per se inflat in

[28] Those who know and do not carry it out shall be beaten with many whips.
[29] Knowledge puffs up…

superbiam, ut daemones qui Graeco nomine a scientia sic sunt nominati. Propter elationem scientiae reprimendam datus est Paulo stimulus. Melius est scire infirmitatem nostram, quam naturas rerum; hanc scientiam qui apponit, apponit dolorem peregrationis ex desiderio patriae. (*Knowledge puffs up.* By itself, knowledge is useless, with charity it is useful. By itself, it puffs up into pride, like the demons, which in the Greek language derive their names from knowledge. In order to restrain the pride of knowledge, a thorn is given to Paul. It is better to know our infirmity than the nature of things; whoever adds to this knowledge, adds to the grief of a journey by longing for a homeland.) (PL 114, 532)

The association of devils with knowledge recalls Dame Studie's strictures against the evils of knowledge in B x 209-17. The verse is omitted from the C-text; as with other changes from the B-text, Langland seems to withdraw from his earlier challenges to the Fathers. Ymaginatif then goes on to quote the distinction between *quod scimus* and *quod vidimus* from John 3: 11:

Clergie and kynde wit cometh of syghte and techyng,
As the book bereth witnesse to burnes that kan rede:
Quod scimus loquimur, quod vidimus testamur.[30]
Of *quod scimus* cometh clergie, a konnynge of hevene,
And of *quod vidimus* cometh kynde wit, of sighte of diverse peple (64-7).

[30] What we know, we speak; what we see, we bear witness to.

The anonymous *Gloss* on this verse reads:

> *Quod scimus loquimur*. Id est quia ipse est scientia, locutio et sermo Patris. *Et quod vidimus testamur.* Quia ipse visio, et verum testimonium et veritas Patris. (*We speak what we know.* That is because he himself is the knowledge, speech and word of the Father. *And we testify to what we have seen.* Because he is the revelation, the faithful testimony and the truth of the Father.) (PL 114, 367)

Why the glossator preferred *scientia* to *sapientia* cannot be known; but it seems to give some authority for Ymaginatif's substitution in line 57a. *Quod scimus* seems to be the Augustinian "true intellectual nature", referred to in chapter seven; it gives rise to "a konnynge of hevene" or theology, derived from teaching, the handing on of the Church's faith (65); it seems to correspond to *sapientia*. *Quod vidimus*, however, gives rise to "kynde wit", which here seems to mean experiential knowledge of the world, or *scientia*; in other words, what Will looked forward to in B viii 58 and what he saw during his vision of Middelerthe. This reverses Alexander of Hales' association of sight with *scientia*. However, next Ymaginatif subordinates both "kynde wit" and "clergie" to grace:

> Ac grace is a gifte of God, and of greete love spryngeth;
> Knew nevere clerk how it cometh forth, ne kynde wit the weyes:
> *Nescit aliquis unde venit aut quo vadit.*[31]
> Ac yet is clergie to comende, and kynde wit bothe (68-70).

[31] No-one knows where it comes from and where it goes.

Not only is the hierarchy of *sapientia* and *scientia* again abolished; but both are placed on a lower level than grace, whose origin neither can discover. Having made "clergie" and "kynde wit" equal in status, Ymaginatif commends them both because of their kinship with Christ: "Forthi I counseille thee for Cristes sake, clergie that thow lovye,/ For kynde wit is of his kyn and neighe cosynes bothe/ To Oure Lord, leve me – forthi love hem, I rede" (92-4). But then he resubordinates "kynde wit" to "clergie", placing *sapientia* below *scientia* when he says that "kynde wit" needs the teaching of clerks if it is not to be dangerous and futile:

> And as a blynd man in bataille bereth wepne to fighte,
> And hath noon hap with his ax his enemy to hitte,
> Namoore kan a kynde witted man, but clerkes him teche,
> Come for al his kynde wit, to Cristendom and be saved (105-8).

Ymaginatif says, then, that there is a discontinuity between "kynde wit" and the teaching of "clerkes", and that Will's quest for "kynde knowynge" has no bearing on his salvation. His perception of the superiority of "clergie" to "kynde wit" not only contradicts Lady Holi Chirche's teaching, but also seems at variance with what he says at the end of the passus about Baptism not being essential to salvation (280-95). However, next, in clerical mode again, he demands respect for learning: "Forthi, I conseille alle creatures no clergie to dispise,/ Ne sette shorte by hir science, whatso thei don hemselve" (121-2). The context suggests that "clergie" here means the clergy; "science" refers to their learning. Soon after, "kynde wit" again appears more positively, in the sense of empirical and

deductive knowledge, with perhaps a reminiscence of the wonders of creation which Will has seen in Passus xi, and to which he has declared himself open in B viii 58: "Ac kynde wit cometh of alle kynnes sightes -/ Of briddes and of beestes, [of blisse and sorwe],/ Of tastes of truthe and of deceits" (128-30). So taste is linked with "kynde wit". But oddly, when one might have expected a further validation of empiricism and deduction, Ymaginatif again denies that this knowledge is saving knowledge:

> Ac thorugh hir science soothly was nevere no soule ysaved,
> Ne broght by hir bokes to blisse ne to joye;
> For alle hir kynde knowynges come but of diverse sightes.
> Patriarkes and prophetes repreveden hir science,
> And seiden hir wordes ne hir wisdoms was but a folye;
> As to the clergie of Crist, counted it but a trufle:
> *Sapiencia huius mundi stulticia apud Deum*[32] (134-9a).

In the *Gloss* on this verse from I Corinthians 3: 17, St Ambrose substitutes *astutia* for *stultitia*: "Abusive ponitur sapientia pro astutia." (It is a mistake to replace wisdom with cunning.) (PL 114, 524) *Astutia* here carries the pejorative overtones of *scientia* in Dame Studie's speech, chiefly the association with deception. But at least Ambrose knows the difference between *scientia* and *sapientia*. However, Ymaginatif fails to make the distinction between the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of God. Again, the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia* is collapsed; *sapientia* is of this world only.

[32] The wisdom of this world is folly with God.

"Diverse sightes," like "alle kynnes sightes," is reminiscent of Alexander of Hales' association of *scientia* with sight; but there is no sign of a link here between clergie ("the konnynge of hevene") and taste. Once again, the inadequacy of knowledge for salvation is reaffirmed.

Then follows the incarnational passage commented on in chapter two: "For the heighe Holy Goost hevene shal tocleve/ And love shal lepe out after into this lowe erthe/ And clennesse shal cacchen it and clerkes shullen it fynde" (140-2a). The allusion is both to the Annunciation in Luke 1: 26-38 and the Wisdom of Solomon 18: 15, which forms the Antiphon on the Magnificat at Vespers on December 26th: "Omnipotens sermo tuus, Domine, exsiliens de caelo a regalibus sedibus durus debellator in mediam exterminii terram prosilivit".[33] The titles "Word" and "Wisdom" of God were used interchangeably in Hellenistic Judaism, both referring to God's agent in creation (Genesis 1, *passim,* and Proverbs 8: 30 ("cum eo eram cuncta componens"[34])). The *Gloss* on Proverbs routinely identifies Christ with Wisdom, for instance on 1: 20, attributed to Bede. The result of this is that Wisdom is removed from the sphere of human acquisition, and appears only as an attribute of God disclosed to human beings. By equating it with love, Ymaginatif restores wisdom's prestige; but then promptly undermines this gracious act of disclosure by making it the sole preserve of "clerkes" (142).

What follows is in praise of "clergie" as a necessary aid to salvation. Oddly, at the

[33] Your all-powerful word, Lord, springing forth as a mighty warrior from heaven, leapt down from his royal throne into the midst of the land of the doomed.
[34] I was with him, putting everything together.

end of his speech, faith and hope are commended: "And wher it worth or worth noght, the bileve is gret of truthe,/ And an hope hangynge therinne to have a mede for his truthe" (288-9). But there is no mention of charity. So, while deconstructing learning, Ymaginatif advocates it, and as Fiona Somerset points out, his commendation of "clergie" relies on the methods of "kynde wit".[35] One wonders, with Somerset, whether Langland might not be critiquing his own imagination, with its inconsistencies and tendency to overstate the case. Ralph Hanna indeed describes him as having "an extraordinarily integrative mind filled with masses of bric à brac".[36] One wonders also whether the differences between "kynde wit" earlier in the poem and Ymaginatif's version, and his own inconsistencies, are simply part of Langland's dramatic characterisation of him. Though, after the criticism of him in earlier chapters, we might be disinclined to accept Ymaginatif's blurring of the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*, the fact remains that Trajan, and later Piers, Anima and the Samaritan, the latter three highly reliable guides, do the same. Furthermore, we can see from them and Dame Studie in B x and the friars in B xx that the pursuit of knowledge for solely academic ends is a distraction from ethical behaviour. So from here onwards, there are few explicit signs of the positive attitude towards "kynde wit" revealed in the earlier passūs. Ymaginatif's intervention marks a real turning-point, as does the banquet scene which follows in B xiii.

Even in the absence of specific quotations, it is hard to doubt that on the bodily

[35] *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 44.
[36] 'Langland's Ymaginatif: Images and the Limits of Poetry', in Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson and Nicolette Zieman (eds.), *Images, Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England: Textuality and the Visual Image* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 87.

level, this episode is a parody of the banquet of wisdom in Proverbs 9: 1-5:

> Sapientia aedificavit sibi domum excidit columnas septem. Immolavit victimas suas, miscuit vinum et proposuit mensam suam. Misit ancillas suas ut vocarent ad arcem et ad moena civitatis, "Si quis est parvulus, veniat ad me," et insipientibus locuta est, "Venite, comedite panem meum et bibite vinum quod miscui vobis". (Wisdom has built herself a house and set up seven pillars. She has sacrificed the victims, mixed the wine and set her table. She has sent out her handmaids to call people to the citadel and fortifications of the city: "If anyone is humble, let him come to me", and to the foolish, she said, "Come, eat my bread and drink my wine which I have mixed for you.")

Two obvious differences between this passage and the banquet scene are that the biblical wisdom has only one table, instead of two here; and that here the main table, though populated by the ostensibly wise, is the table of extravagance and gluttony; the meal will end in vomiting (B xiii 45a-b). The link between *sapor* and *sapientia* has been subverted. On the allegorical level, by contrast, much is made of the true food which Pacience accepts; Scripture serves him and Will with "metes many", some from Ambrose, Augustine and the four Evangelists (37-9a). They are given a diet of penitential psalms, much to Pacience's delight (51-8), recalling Piers after the tearing of the Pardon. Pacience utters his own *ordinatio* of penitential psalms to focalise his quest for blessedness. As Michael Kuczynski has shown, Psalm 50 was used in the Middle Ages both as a penitential psalm on the devotional and liturgical level, and a stimulus to actual

repentance.[37] Eating penitence, specifically the penitence of the psalmist, symbolises taking it into one's whole system, which in turn becomes a step to externalising it in charitable works in the community. By re-enacting the penitence of David, Pacience is attempting to draw Conscience away from the worldly wisdom of the other table and commit himself to a more ethical life. Thus Ymaginatif's polarity between knowledge and love here turns into a real conflict with serious ethical consequences.

Later in the scene, Clergie announces that Piers too, like Trajan, is only prepared to tolerate learning when it is subordinate to love:

> For oon Piers the Plowman hath impugned us alle,
> And set alle sciences at a sop save love one;
> And no text ne taketh to mayntayne his cause
> But *dilige Deum* and *Domine quis habitabit*…[38]
> And seith that Dowel and Dobet arn two infinites,
> Whiche infinites with a feith fynden out Dobest,
> Which shal save mannes soule – thus seith Piers the Plowman (124-30).

Piers's description of Dowel and Dobet as "two infinites" seems to undermine his privileging of love over learning.

[37] 1995, pp. 88-119.
[38] Love God: and Lord, who shall live?

Another point of interest in this scene, noted by James Simpson,[39] is that Pacience, speaking of love, explicitly contradicts Dame Studie's approval of Cato and demands forgiveness of one's enemies:

> And so thow lere the to lovye, for the Lordes love of hevene,
> Thyn enemy in alle wise eveneforth with thiselve.
> Cast coles on his heed of alle kynde speche;
> Bothe with werkes and with wordes fonde his love to wynne,
> And leye on him thus with love til he laughe on the;
> And but he bowe for this betyng, blynd mote he worthe! (143-8).

Not only is "science" here ignored altogether in favour of love, but Pacience playfully undermines Dame Studie's preference for Cato; the paradox of lines 147-8 shows that love of enemies is beyond the realm of *scientia*. Significantly, however, Pacience's affective preaching moves Conscience to repentance (190-2). There is also a change in Will; he too is now more perceptive. As Rudd points out, he sees through both the Doctor and Haukyn without needing other people to point out their failings.[40]

Even so, as late as B xv, Will is still distracted by a Faustian desire for knowledge, and when Anima challenges him (44-6), he replies: "Ye, sire," I seide, "by so no man were greved,/ Alle the sciences under sonne and alle the sotile craftes/ I wolde I

[39] 1986 a, 15.
[40] 1994, p. 166.

knewe and kouthe kyndely in myn herte!" (47-9). Will's desire elicits a rebuke from Anima, as we saw in chapter five. It is, significantly, "coveitise to konne and to knowe science" that brought about Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden (62). Quoting St Bernard's saying, "Sciencie appetitus hominem immortalitatis gloriam spoliavit"[41] (63a), Anima too blurs the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*; the *appetitus scientiae* necessarily involves *sapor.* He alludes to Proverbs 25: 27 in the following lines, like Dame Studie, quoting Romans 12: 3:

> And right as honey is yvel to defie and engleymeth the mawe,
> Right so that thorugh reson wolde the roote knowe
> Of God and hise grete myghtes – hise graces it letteth.
> For in the likynge lith a pride and a licames coveitise,
> Ayein Cristes counseil and alle clerkes techynge –
> That is, *Non plus sapere quam oportet sapere* (64-9).

Excessive *sapientia*, then, is an obstacle to grace. Anima characterises the desire to know as itself a bodily appetite, a "licames coveitise", a concupiscence; as we saw earlier, Will too coveted to learn more "kynde knowynge" (B viii 110-1). The full version of the *Gloss* on the verse from Proverbs reads, in Bede's commentary:

> *Sicut qui mel multum comedit etc*. Dulcedo enim mellis,[42] si plus quam necesse

[41] The desire for knowledge deprived mankind of the glory of immortality.
[42] The text of the *Gloss* breaks off here.

est sumitur, unde delectatur os, inde vita comedentis necatur. Dulcis quoque est requisitio majestatis; sed qui plus hunc scrutari appetit quam humanitatis agnitio permittit, ipsa hunc ejus gloria permit, quia velut mel sumptum immoderate, perscrutantis sensum, dum non capitur, rumpit. Non hoc autem solum quisque sapiens attendere debet, ne altiora se quaerat, et ne fortiora scrutatus sit, verum etiam ne ea quae recte atque utiliter scire potuit, immoderatis sermonibus sibimet minus utilia reddat. (*Like him who eats much honey*. For the sweetness of honey, if more is consumed than necessary, becomes the means whereby the mouth is delighted, but thereby the life of the eater is killed. Sweet also is the exploration of majesty; but he who seeks to examine this more than human perception permits, that same glory of his overpowers him, because, like honey consumed immoderately, it breaks the enquirer's reason, while it is not grasped. Not only this, any wise man should beware of seeking higher things or investigating more weighty ones, lest he should also render those things he can rightly and usefully know less useful to himself by immoderate words). (PL 113, 1109; 91, 1015)

Even now, after the nominal end of the *Vita Dowel*, Will desires to know what charity is (148). He quotes I Corinthians 13: 4-5, recalling Ymaginatif's quotation of I Corinthians 8: 1, with its contrast of *sapientia* and *charitas*: "Ac charite that Poul preiseth best and moost plesaunt to Oure Saveour –/ As *non inflatur, non est ambiciosa, non querit que sua sunt*" (156-7).

Anima too rejects the knowledge of the learned:

"Clerkes have no knowing," quod he, "but by werkes and wordes,
Ac Piers the Plowman parceyveth moore depper
What is the wille, and wherfore that many wight suffreth:
Et vidit Deus cogitationes eorum"[43] (198-200a).

Whether Piers' insight belongs more to *scientia* than to *sapientia* is hard to tell. It is certainly the result of his participation in God by grace. What he seems to have is Ymaginatif's "konnynge of hevene", while the knowledge of "clerkes" is earth-bound.

The Samaritan takes up Ymaginatif's erasure of the subordination of *scientia* to *sapientia* and describes the Son as "the science of the Father", where, as in B xvi 36, one might have expected *sapientia:* "The fyngres formen a ful hand to portreye or peynten;/ Kervynge and compasynge is craft of the fyngres./ Right so is the Sone the science of the Fader" (B xvii 172). Given the connotations of *scientia* as a faculty of the intellect, not the will or love, we seem to have a blurring similar to that practised by Ymaginatif; yet as we have seen, *scientia* is as an attribute of God the Son in the *Gloss* on John 3: 11. The Samaritan speaks, not of a purely intellectual knowledge, but practical abilities, such as the ability to create and bring one's purpose into effect. Perhaps there is a hint of Christ's career as a carpenter, recalling the role of Wisdom in creation, as noted earlier. A surprising omission is the lack of ethical implications, any reference to love or the will, which one might have expected from the Samaritan. However, calling the Son "the science of the Father" implies a higher valuation of *scientia* than was customary in the

[43] And God sees their thoughts.

Middle Ages; perhaps Langland is attempting to undermine the academic distinction, and so rise above the sterility of the arts curriculum. Alternatively, perhaps he is hinting that human "science" is a participation in God, like Truth, Kynde, free will and "myghte", as we saw in chapter seven.

What has become apparent in this survey is that Langland challenges the teaching of the Fathers, especially St Augustine, on the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*, making them interchangeable, abolishing the traditional association of *sapientia* with spiritual knowledge. Yet the *Gloss* also uses *sapientia* and *scientia* interchangeably. This seems to represent a partial challenge to Augustinian teaching. The *Gloss* also, in one relevant passage, shows that we have nothing to learn ethically from knowledge, in another the mortal danger of intellectual inquiry, although in a third, the contribution of knowledge and wisdom to a moral life is recognised. As far as the ethical implications of *scientia* and *sapientia* are concerned, Langland shows that they are not ethically productive; both have to be subordinated to love, the ground of social cohesion. This is consistent with the findings of chapter seven, that the image of God in man is constituted by love, not the intellect. So it is not surprising that *scientia* and *sapientia* are eclipsed by charity. Whereas the two former imply human attainment, something learned and acquired, charity is a gift.

So many themes of this study can be seen to converge on the question of knowledge; the Incarnation, original sin, the primacy of ethics, curiosity and

concupiscence, as well as the image of God in man. Yet, *pace* Mary Carruthers, it is doubtful whether *Piers Plowman* can be considered an epistemological poem, for knowledge is eventually set aside in favour of love. In view of this, it is strange that the victory of love over knowledge takes place in a poem so full of erudition.

CONCLUSION

One does not have to be a Hegelian or a follower of Harold Bloom to detect a series of reactive tendencies in the theological movements of fourteenth-century England. First, there were the *Moderni*, including Semi-Pelagians and Nominalists, who reacted against late thirteenth-century orthodox theologians such as Robert Kilwardby and John Pecham. Secondly, in explicit reaction to the *Moderni*, Thomas Bradwardine wrote *De Causa Dei*. There followed a sort of informal neo-Augustinian movement, encompassing the *Pearl*-poet, radical theologians such as John Wycliffe, and spiritual writers like Walter Hilton. Among other things, this present study has demonstrated a reaction to neo-Augustinianism on the part of William Langland.

The grounds for this are ethical. *Piers Plowman* is both a spiritual *Bildungsroman*, and a social satire. It provides an account of individual spiritual growth, which takes human frailty and obtuseness into account. But unlike *The Prelude*, for example, it contains a variety of voices, some internal, some external, often critiquing those who have spoken earlier. It is not safe to assume Langland's agreement with any of them, except Christ, his *alter ego* the Samaritan, and Grace. One can see a kind of Keatsian negative capability at work; Langland does not necessarily agree with his voices' every word, but in giving them voice, sets up the poem's dialectic.

At the same time, especially in the *Visio* and the Dobest passūs, political and

ecclesiastical abuses are laid bare; no section of society is exempt from this exposure. Given all this, Langland scrutinises the contemporary understanding of some of the main doctrines of the Church to examine whether or not they are conducive to spiritual progress in the individual or reform in Church and society; to explore their ethical productivity, in other words. These doctrines include predestination and free will, original sin, grace, the image of God in man, the Incarnation, and the relationship of wisdom and knowledge. In each case, the understanding which he critiques is the Augustinian one, in spite of the zeal of a number of scholars who claim Langland as an Augustinian. In particular, predestination, original sin and divine impassibility have potentially negative consequences for ethics, because they risk de-motivating the believer; the image of God and the relationship between wisdom and knowledge as understood by Augustine, because they are distractions from the primacy of charity. But nothing intrinsic to the Catholic faith is discarded. What Langland does is to accept the Church's basic doctrines, while seeking to explore their more radical implications. He interprets them in such a way as to make them ethically productive; in other words, he uses a radical interpretation of the Church's teachings to elicit and encourage a deeper commitment to ethical living, and so promote social cohesion. It is surely significant that in B xix and xx, the Church is called "the Barn of Unitee".

Does this put Langland in the heterodox camp? In this thesis, I have argued that he finds in the *Glossa Ordinaria* another version of the Catholic faith alternative to the Augustinian, yet of unimpeachable orthodoxy. By and large, the *Gloss* contains little of Augustine's ethical teaching and avoids some of his more extreme theological teachings.

Its compilers excerpt copiously from other Fathers on matters such as wisdom and knowledge. Langland draws on the *Gloss* most often on these and other ethical or ethically-related texts. Its milder preferences form the theological underpinning of *Piers Plowman*, while the Augustinian understandings of predestination, free will, divine impassibility and the image of God in people are all found wanting. The doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* is not an issue on which the *Gloss* makes a contribution, though Augustine's grasp of it is weak. At the same time, Langland extends the application of the *Gloss*'s ethical teaching to the laity as well as the clergy. We noted in chapter two that the more reactionary elements among the clergy at the beginning of the fifteenth century attempted to restore the distinction between them and the laity which had been eroded in the closing decades of the fourteenth century. Largely this was in reaction to the Wycliffite heresy, but one wonders whether the reactionaries were also trying to resist Langland's extension of the *Gloss*'s relevance to the laity.

That there was, in fact, more than one orthodoxy available to the fourteenth-century Christian is apparent in *Piers Plowman* from the presence and teaching of Lady Holi Chirche, which is foregrounded by being placed at the very beginning of Will's questionings. There is nothing Augustinian in her teaching, apart from the text applied to Lucifer's ambition in B i 119a. As we have seen during this study, she is more of a Semi-Pelagian, in her teaching on what constitutes the image of God in man, the relationship between faith and works and the necessity of *redde quod debes*. So we may define Langland's theological standpoint as one of radical orthodoxy, that is accepting the Church's teaching, in its non-Augustinian form, while exploring its implications with a

view to posing fundamental questions as to the kind of obedience in faith and morals required of clergy and laity alike.

This study has focused on Langland's indebtedness to the *Gloss*, so the investigation of an anti-Augustinian tendency has been secondary. Perhaps further study might re-open the debate of thirty years ago as to whether Langland was an Augustinian or not and explore more fully the extent of his dissociation from Augustinianism and his identification of it as a factor in creating such a divided and morally anarchic society. But far from launching a full-frontal attack on Augustine, Langland's explicit references to him are mostly complimentary, at least superficially. The prestige of "Austyn the olde" remains intact, as he holds his place among the Four Doctors of the Church (B x 243, xiii 39, xiv 316 and xv 37), though in xix 271, he and the Fathers are subordinate to Piers. Only in B x 118 and 452-65 is this tinged with irony. As we cannot accept Manly's dismissal of Langland's theology, neither can we glibly dismiss *Piers Plowman* as a period piece or a literary and theological oddity. It examines a number of issues with strong contemporary resonance; the preferential option for the poor and its reconciliation with a paternalistic and hierarchical society; linguistic and community cohesion; the legitimacy of not working as a life-style choice; corruption in church and state; relations between the churches and other faith communities; and the revival of clericalism and lay opposition to it. Future study of *Piers Plowman* is certain to uncover more and more facets of a complex and profound poem.

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